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THE WORLD'S ONE HUNDRED BEST SHORT STORIES

VOLUME THREE

MYSTERY

THE WORLD'S ONE HUNDRED BEST SHORT STORIES

[IN TEN VOLUMES]

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

VOLUME THREE

MYSTERY

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THE WORLD'S 100 BEST SHORT STORIES

THE DOOMDORF MYSTERY

By Melville Davisson Post

The pioneer was not the only man in the great mountains behind Virginia. Strange aliens drifted in after the Colonial wars. All foreign armies are sprinkled with a cockle of adventurers that take root and remain. They were with Braddock and La Salle, and they rode north out of Mexico after her many empires went to pieces.

I think Doomdorf crossed the seas with Iturbide when that ill-starred adventurer returned to be shot against a wall; but there was no Southern blood in him. He came from some European race remote and barbaric. The evidences were all about him. He was a huge figure of a man, with a black spade beard, broad, thick hands, and square, flat fingers.

He had found a wedge of land between the Crown's grant to Daniel Davisson and a Washington survey. It was an uncovered triangle not worth the running of the lines; and so, no doubt, was left out, a sheer rock standing up out of the river for a base, and a peak of the mountain rising northward behind it for an apex.

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Doomdorf squatted on the rock. He must have brought a belt of gold pieces when he took to his horse, for he hired old Robert Steuart's slaves and built a stone house on the rock, and he brought the furnishings overland from a frigate in the Chesapeake; and then in the handfuls of earth, wherever a root would hold, he planted the mountain behind his house with peach trees. The gold gave out; but the devil is fertile in resources. Doomdorf built a log still and turned the first fruits of the garden into a hell-brew. The idle and the vicious came with their stone jugs, and violence and riot flowed out.

The government of Virginia was remote and its arm short and feeble; but the men who held the lands west of the mountains against the savages under grants from George, and after that held them against George himself, were efficient and expeditious. They had long patience, but when they failed they went up from their fields and drove the thing before them out of the land, like a scourge of God.

There came a day, then, when my Uncle Abner and Squire Randolph rode through the gap of the mountains to have the thing out with Doomdorf. The work of this brew, which had the odors of Eden and the impulses of the devil in it, could be borne no longer. The drunken negroes had shot old Duncan's cattle and burned his haystacks, and the land was on its feet.

They rode alone, but they were worth an army of little men. Randolph was vain and pompous and given over to extravagance of words, but he was a gentleman beneath it, and fear was an alien and a stranger to him. And Abner was the right hand of the land.

It was a day in early summer and the sun lay hot.

They crossed through the broken spine of the mountains and trailed along the river in the shade of the great chestnut trees. The road was only a path and the horses went one before the other. It left the river when the rock began to rise and, making a detour through the grove of peach trees, reached the house on the mountain side. Randolph and Abner got down, unsaddled their horses and turned them out to graze, for their business with Doomdorf would not be over in an hour. Then they took a steep path that brought them out on the mountain side of the house.

A man sat on a big red-roan horse in the paved court before the door. He was a gaunt old man. He sat bare-headed, the palms of his hands resting on the pommel of his saddle, his chin sunk in his black stock, his face in retrospection, the wind moving gently his great shock of voluminous white hair. Under him the huge red horse stood with his legs spread out like a horse of stone.

There was no sound. The door to the house was closed; insects moved in the sun; a shadow crept out from the motionless figure, and swarms of yellow butterflies maneuvered like an army.

Abner and Randolph stopped. They knew the tragic figure—a circuit rider of the hills who preached the invective of Isaiah as tho he were the mouthpiece of a militant and avenging overlord; as tho the government of Virginia were the awful theocracy of the Book of Kings. The horse was dripping with sweat and the man bore the dust and the evidences of a journey on him.

"Bronson," said Abner, "where is Doomdorf?"

The old man lifted his head and looked down at Abner over the pommel of the saddle.

"'Surely,'" he said, "'he covereth his feet in his summer chamber.'"

Abner went over and knocked on the closed door, and presently the white, frightened face of a woman looked out at him. She was a little, faded woman, with fair hair, a broad foreign face, but with the delicate evidences of gentle blood.

Abner repeated his question.

"Where is Doomdorf?"

"Oh, sir," she answered with a queer lisping accent, "he went to lie down in his south room after his midday meal, as his custom is; and I went to the orchard to gather any fruit that might be ripened." She hesitated and her voice lisped into a whisper: "He is not come out and I cannot wake him."

The two men followed her through the hall and up the stairway to the door.

"It is always bolted," she said, "when he goes to lie down." And she knocked feebly with the tips of her fingers.

There was no answer and Randolph rattled the doorknob.

"Come out, Doomdorf!" he called in his big, bellowing voice.

There was only silence and the echoes of the words among the rafters. Then Randolph set his shoulder to the door and burst it open.

They went in. The room was flooded with sun from the tall south windows. Doomdorf lay on a couch in a little offset of the room, a great scarlet patch on his bosom and a pool of scarlet on the floor.

The woman stood for a moment staring; then she cried out:

"At last I have killed him!" And she ran like a frightened hare.

The two men closed the door and went over to the couch. Doomdorf had been shot to death. There was a great ragged hole in his waistcoat. They began to look about for the weapon with which the deed had been accomplished, and in a moment found it—a fowling piece lying in two dogwood forks against the wall. The gun had just been fired; there was a freshly exploded paper cap under the hammer.

There was little else in the room—a loom-woven rag carpet on the floor; wooden shutters flung back from the windows; a great oak table, and on it a big, round, glass water bottle, filled to its glass stopper with raw liquor from the still. The stuff was limpid and clear as spring water; and, but for its pungent odor, one would have taken it for God's brew instead of Doomdorf's. The sun lay on it and against the wall where hung the weapon that had ejected the dead man out of life.

"Abner," said Randolph, "this is murder! The woman took that gun down from the wall and shot Doomdorf while he slept."

Abner was standing by the table, his fingers round his chin.

"Randolph," he replied, "what brought Bronson here?"

"The same outrages that brought us," said Randolph. "The mad old circuit rider has been preaching a crusade against Doomdorf far and wide in the hills."

Abner answered, without taking his fingers from about his chin:

"You think this woman killed Doomdorf? Well, let us go and ask Bronson who killed him."

They closed the door, leaving the dead man on his couch, and went down into the court.

The old circuit rider had put away his horse and got an ax. He had taken off his coat and pushed his shirtsleeves up over his long elbows. He was on his way to the still to destroy the barrels of liquor. He stopped when the two men came out, and Abner called to him.

"Bronson," he said, "who killed Doomdorf?"

"I killed him," replied the old man, and went on toward the still.

Randolph swore under his breath. "By the Almighty," he said, "everybody couldn't kill him!"

"Who can tell how many had a hand in it?" replied Abner.

"Two have confessed!" cried Randolph. "Was there perhaps a third? Did you kill him, Abner? And I too? Man, the thing is impossible!"

"The impossible," replied Abner, "looks here like the truth. Come with me, Randolph, and I will show you a thing more impossible than this."

They returned through the house and up the stairs to the room. Abner closed the door behind them.

"Look at this bolt," he said; "it is on the inside and not connected with the lock. How did the one who killed Doomdorf get into this room, since the door was bolted?"

"Through the windows," replied Randolph.

There were but two windows, facing the south, through which the sun entered. Abner led Randolph to them.

"Look!" he said. "The wall of the house is plumb with the sheer face of the rock. It is a hundred feet to the river and the rock is as smooth as a sheet of

glass. But that is not all. Look at these window frames; they are cemented into their casement with dust and they are bound along their edges with cobwebs. These windows have not been opened. How did the assassin enter?"

"The answer is evident," said Randolph: "The one who killed Doomdorf hid in the room until he was asleep; then he shot him and went out."

"The explanation is excellent but for one thing," replied Abner: "How did the assassin bolt the door behind him on the inside of this room after he had gone out?"

Randolph flung out his arms with a hopeless gesture.

"Who knows?" he cried. "Maybe Doomdorf killed himself."

Abner laughed.

"And after firing a handful of shot into his heart he got up and put the gun back carefully into the forks against the wall!"

"Well," cried Randolph, "there is one open road out of this mystery. Bronson and this woman say they killed Doomdorf, and if they killed him they surely know how they did it. Let us go down and ask them."

"In the law court," replied Abner, "that procedure would be considered sound sense; but we are in God's court and things are managed there in a somewhat stranger way. Before we go let us find out, if we can, at what hour it was that Doomdorf died."

He went over and took a big silver watch out of the dead man's pocket. It was broken by a shot and the hands lay at one hour after noon. He stood for a moment fingering his chin.

"At one o'clock," he said. "Bronson, I think, was

on the road to this place, and the woman was on the mountain among the peach trees."

Randolph threw back his shoulders.

"Why waste time in a speculation about it, Abner?" he said. "We know who did this thing. Let us go and get the story of it out of their own mouths. Doomdorf died by the hands of either Bronson or this woman."

"I could better believe it," replied Abner, "but for the running of a certain awful law."

"What law?" said Randolph. "Is it a statute of Virginia?"

"It is a statute," replied Abner, "of an authority somewhat higher. Mark the language of it: 'He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword.' "

He came over and took Randolph by the arm.

"Must! Randolph, did you mark particularly the word 'must'? It is a mandatory law. There is no room in it for the vicissitudes of chance or fortune. There is no way round that word. Thus, we reap what we sow and nothing else; thus, we receive what we give and nothing else. It is the weapon in our own hands that finally destroys us. You are looking at it now." And he turned him about so that the table and the weapon and the dead man were before him. " 'He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword.' And now," he said, "let us go and try the method of the law courts. Your faith is in the wisdom of their ways."

They found the old circuit rider at work in the still, staving in Doomdorf's liquor casks, splitting the oak heads with his ax.

"Bronson," said Randolph, "how did you kill Doomdorf?"

The old man stopped and stood leaning on his ax.

"I killed him," replied the old man, "as Elijah killed the captains of Ahaziah and their fifties. But not by the hand of any man did I pray the Lord God to destroy Doomdorf, but with fire from heaven to destroy him."

He stood up and extended his arms.

"His hands were full of blood," he said. "With his abomination from these groves of Baal he stirred up the people to contention, to strife and murder. The widow and the orphan cried to heaven against him. 'I will surely hear their cry,' is the promise written in the Book. The land was weary of him; and I prayed the Lord God to destroy him with fire from heaven, as he destroyed the Princes of Gomorrah in their palaces!"

Randolph made a gesture as of one who dismisses the impossible, but Abner's face took on a deep, strange look.

"With fire from heaven!" he repeated slowly to himself. Then he asked a question. "A little while ago," he said, "when we came, I asked you where Doomdorf was, and you answered me in the language of the third chapter of the Book of Judges. Why did you answer me like that, Bronson?—'Surely he covereth his feet in his summer chamber.' "

"The woman told me that he had not come down from the room where he had gone up to sleep," replied the old man, "and that the door was locked. And then I knew that he was dead in his summer chamber like Eglon, King of Moab."

He extended his arm toward the south.

"I came here from the Great Valley," he said, "to cut down these groves of Baal and to empty out this

abomination; but I did not know that the Lord had heard my prayer and visited His wrath on Doomdorf until I was come up into these mountains to his door. When the woman spoke I knew it." And he went away to his horse, leaving the ax among the ruined barrels.

Randolph interrupted.

"Come, Abner," he said; "this is wasted time. Bronson did not kill Doomdorf."

Abner answered slowly in his deep, level voice:

"Do you realize, Randolph, how Doomdorf died?"

"Not by fire from heaven, at any rate," said Randolph.

"Randolph," replied Abner, "are you sure?"

"Abner," cried Randolph, "you are pleased to jest, but I am in deadly earnest. A crime has been done here against the state. I am an officer of justice and I propose to discover the assassin if I can."

He walked away toward the house and Abner followed, his hands behind him and his great shoulders thrown loosely forward, with a grim smile about his mouth.

"It is no use to talk with the mad old preacher," Randolph went on. "Let him empty out the liquor and ride away. I won't issue a warrant against him. Prayer may be a handy implement to do a murder with, Abner, but it is not a deadly weapon under the statutes of Virginia. Doomdorf was dead when old Bronson got here with his Scriptural jargon. This woman killed Doomdorf. I shall put her to an inquisition."

"As you like," replied Abner. "Your faith remains in the methods of the law courts."

"Do you know of any better methods?" said Randolph.

"Perhaps," replied Abner, "when you have finished."

Night had entered the valley. The two men went into the house and set about preparing the corpse for burial. They got candles, and made a coffin, and put Doomdorf in it, and straightened out his limbs, and folded his arms across his shot-out heart. Then they set the coffin on benches in the hall.

They kindled a fire in the dining room and sat down before it, with the door open and the red firelight shining through on the dead man's narrow, everlasting house. The woman had put some cold meat, a golden cheese and a loaf on the table. They did not see her, but they heard her moving about the house; and finally, on the gravel court outside, her step and the whinny of a horse. Then she came in, dressed as for a journey. Randolph sprang up.

"Where are you going?" he said.

"To the sea and a ship," replied the woman. Then she indicated the hall with a gesture. "He is dead and I am free."

There was a sudden illumination in her face. Randolph took a step toward her. His voice was big and harsh.

"Who killed Doomdorf?" he cried.

"I killed him," replied the woman. "It was fair!"

"Fair!" echoed the justice. "What do you mean by that?"

The woman shrugged her shoulders and put out her hands with a foreign gesture.

"I remember an old, old man sitting against a sunny wall, and a little girl, and one who came and talked a long time with the old man, while the little girl plucked

yellow flowers out of the grass and put them into her hair. Then finally the stranger gave the old man a gold chain and took the little girl away." She flung out her hands. "Oh, it was fair to kill him!" She looked up with a queer, pathetic smile.

"The old man will be gone by now," she said; "but I shall perhaps find the wall there, with the sun on it, and the yellow flowers in the grass. And now, may I go?"

It is a law of the story-teller's art that he does not tell a story. It is the listener who tells it. The story-teller does but provide him with the stimuli.

Randolph got up and walked about the floor. He was a justice of the peace in a day when that office was filled only by the landed gentry, after the English fashion; and the obligations of the law were strong on him. If he should take liberties with the letter of it, how could the weak and the evil be made to hold it in respect? Here was this woman before him a confessed assassin. Could he let her go?

Abner sat unmoving by the hearth, his elbow on the arm of his chair, his palm propping up his jaw, his face clouded in deep lines. Randolph was consumed with vanity and the weakness of ostentation, but he shouldered his duties for himself. Presently he stopped and looked at the woman, wan, faded like some prisoner of legend escaped out of fabled dungeons into the sun.

The firelight flickered past her to the box on the benches in the hall, and the vast, inscrutable justice of heaven entered and overcame him.

"Yes," he said. "Go! There is no jury in Virginia that would hold a woman for shooting a beast like that." And he thrust out his arm, with the fingers extended toward the dead man.

The woman made a little awkward curtsy.

"I thank you, sir." Then she hesitated and lisped, "But I have not shoot him."

"Not shoot him!" cried Randolph. "Why, the man's heart is riddled!"

"Yes, sir," she said simply, like a child. "I kill him, but have not shoot him."

Randolph took two long strides toward the woman.

"Not shoot him!" he repeated. "How then, in the name of heaven, did you kill Doomdorf?" And his big voice filled the empty places of the room.

"I will show you, sir," she said.

She turned and went away into the house. Presently she returned with something folded up in a linen towel. She put it on the table between the loaf of bread and the yellow cheese.

Randolph stood over the table, and the woman's deft fingers undid the towel from round its deadly contents; and presently the thing lay there uncovered.

It was a little crude model of a human figure done in wax with a needle thrust through the bosom.

Randolph stood up with a great intake of the breath.

"Magic! By the eternal!"

"Yes, sir," the woman explained, in her voice and manner of a child. "I have try to kill him many times—oh, very many times!—with witch words which I have remember; but always they fail. Then, at last, I make him in wax, and I put a needle through his heart; and I kill him very quickly."

It was as clear as daylight, even to Randolph, that the woman was innocent. Her little harmless magic was the pathetic effort of a child to kill a dragon. He hesitated a moment before he spoke, and then he decided like the gentleman he was. If it helped the

child to believe that her enchanted straw had slain the monster—well, he would let her believe it.

"And now, sir, may I go?"

Randolph looked at the woman in a sort of wonder.

"Are you not afraid," he said, "of the night and the mountains, and the long road?"

"Oh no, sir," she replied simply. "The good God will be everywhere now."

It was an awful commentary on the dead man—that this strange half-child believed that all the evil in the world had gone out with him; that now that he was dead, the sunlight of heaven would fill every nook and corner.

It was not a faith that either of the two men wished to shatter, and they let her go. It would be daylight presently and the road through the mountains to the Chesapeake was open.

Randolph came back to the fireside after he had helped her into the saddle, and sat down. He tapped on the hearth for some time idly with the iron poker; and then finally he spoke.

"This is the strangest thing that ever happened," he said. "Here's a mad old preacher who thinks that he killed Doomdorf with fire from Heaven, like Elijah the Tishbite; and here is a simple child of a woman who thinks she killed him with a piece of magic of the Middle Ages—each as innocent of his death as I am. And yet, by the eternal, the beast is dead!"

He drummed on the hearth with the poker, lifting it up and letting it drop through the hollow of his fingers.

"Somebody shot Doomdorf. But who? And how did he get into and out of that shut-up room? The assassin that killed Doomdorf must have gotten into the room to kill him. Now, how did he get in?" He

spoke as to himself; but my uncle sitting across the hearth replied:

"Through the window."

"Through the window!" echoed Randolph. "Why, man, you yourself showed me that the window had not been opened, and the precipice below it a fly could hardly climb. Do you tell me now that the window was opened?"

"No," said Abner, "it was never opened."

Randolph got on his feet.

"Abner," he cried, "are you saying that the one who killed Doomdorf climbed the sheer wall and got in through a closed window, without disturbing the dust or the cobwebs on the window frame?"

My uncle looked Randolph in the face.

"The murderer of Doomdorf did even more," he said. "That assassin not only climbed the face of that precipice and got in through the closed window, but he shot Doomdorf to death and got out again through the closed window without leaving a single track or trace behind, and without disturbing a grain of dust or a thread of a cobweb."

Randolph swore a great oath.

"The thing is impossible!" he cried. "Men are not killed today in Virginia by black art or a curse of God."

"By black art, no," replied Abner; "but by the curse of God, yes. I think they are."

Randolph drove his clenched right hand into the palm of his left.

"By the eternal!" he cried. "I would like to see the assassin who could do a murder like this, whether he be an imp from the pit or an angel out of Heaven."

"Very well," replied Abner, undisturbed. "When

he comes back tomorrow I will show you the assassin who killed Doomdorf."

When day broke they dug a grave and buried the dead man against the mountain among his peach trees. It was noon when that work was ended. Abner threw down his spade and looked up at the sun.

"Randolph," he said, "let us go and lay an ambush for this assassin. He is on the way here."

And it was a strange ambush that he laid. When they were come again into the chamber where Doomdorf died he bolted the door; then he loaded the fowling piece and put it carefully back on its rack against the wall. After that he did another curious thing: He took the blood-stained coat, which they had stripped off the dead man when they had prepared his body for the earth, put a pillow in it and laid it on the couch precisely where Doomdorf had slept. And while he did these things Randolph stood in wonder and Abner talked:

"Look you, Randolph. . . . We will trick the murderer. . . . We will catch him in the act."

Then he went over and took the puzzled justice by the arm.

"Watch!" he said. "The assassin is coming along the wall!"

But Randolph heard nothing, saw nothing. Only the sun entered. Abner's hand tightened on his arm.

"It is here! Look!" And he pointed to the wall.

Randolph, following the extended finger, saw a tiny brilliant disk of light moving slowly up the wall toward the lock of the fowling piece. Abner's hand became a vise and his voice rang as over metal.

"'He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword.' It is the water bottle, full of Doom-

dorf's liquor, focusing the sun. . . . And look, Randolph, how Bronson's prayer was answered!"

The tiny disk of light traveled on the plate of the lock.

"It is fire from heaven!"

The words rang above the roar of the fowling piece, and Randolph saw the dead man's coat leap up on the couch, riddled by the shot. The gun, in its natural position on the rack, pointed to the couch standing at the end of the chamber, beyond the offset of the wall, and the focused sun had exploded the percussion cap.

Randolph made a great gesture, with his arm extended.

"It is a world," he said, "filled with the mysterious joinder of accident!"

"It is a world," replied Abner, "filled with the mysterious justice of God!"

THE THREE STRANGERS

By Thomas Hardy

Among the few features of agricultural England which retain an appearance but little modified by the lapse of centuries, may be reckoned the high, grassy and furzy downs, coombs, or ewe-leases, as they are indifferently called, that fill a large area of certain counties in the south and south-west. If any mark of human occupation is met with hereon, it usually takes the form of the solitary cottage of some shepherd.

Fifty years ago such a lonely cottage stood on such a down, and may possibly be standing there now. In spite of its loneliness, however, the spot, by actual measurement, was not more than five miles from a county-town. Yet that affected it little. Five miles of irregular upland, during the long inimical seasons, with their sleets, snows, rains, and mists, afford withdrawing space enough to isolate a Timon or a Nebuchadnezzar; much less, in fair weather, to please that less repellent tribe, the poets, philosophers, artists, and others who "conceive and meditate of pleasant things."

Some old earthen camp or barrow, some clump of trees, at least some starved fragment of ancient hedge is usually taken advantage of in the erection of these forlorn dwellings. But, in the present case, such a kind of shelter had been disregarded. Higher Crowstairs, as the house was called, stood quite detached

(From "Wessex Tales," by Thomas Hardy; Harper & Brothers, Publishers.)

and undefended. The only reason for its precise situation seemed to be the crossing of two footpaths at right angles hard by, which may have crossed there and thus for a good five hundred years. Hence the house was exposed to the elements on all sides. But, tho the wind up here blew unmistakably when it did blow, and the rain hit hard whenever it fell, the various weathers of the winter season were not quite so formidable on the coomb as they were imagined to be by dwellers on low ground. The raw rimes were not so pernicious as in the hollows, and the frosts were scarcely so severe. When the shepherd and his family who tenanted the house were pitied for their sufferings from the exposure, they said that upon the whole they were less inconvenienced by "wuzzes and flames" (hoarses and phlegms) than when they had lived by the stream of a snug neighboring valley.

The night of March 28, 182–, was precisely one of the nights that were wont to call forth these expressions of commiseration. The level rainstorm smote walls, slopes, and hedges like the clothyard shafts of Senlac and Crecy. Such sheep and outdoor animals as had no shelter stood with their buttocks to the winds; while the tails of little birds trying to roost on some scraggy thorn were blown inside-out like umbrellas. The gable-end of the cottage was stained with wet, and the eavesdroppings flapped against the wall. Yet never was commiseration for the shepherd more misplaced. For that cheerful rustic was entertaining a large party in glorification of the christening of his second girl.

The guests had arrived before the rain began to fall, and they were all now assembled in the chief or living room of the dwelling. A glance into the apart-

ment at eight o'clock on this eventful evening would have resulted in the opinion that it was as cozy and comfortable a nook as could be wished for in boisterous weather. The calling of its inhabitant was proclaimed by a number of highly-polished sheep-crooks without stems that were hung ornamentally over the fireplace, the curl of each shining crook varying from the antiquated type engraved in the p riarchal pictures of old family Bibles to the most approved fashion of the last local sheep-fair. The room was lighted by half-a-dozen candles, having wicks only a trifle smaller than the grease which enveloped them, in candlesticks that were never used but at high-days, holy-days, and family feasts. The lights were scattered about the room, two of them standing on the chimney-piece. This position of candles was in itself significant. Candles on the chimney-piece always meant a party.

On the hearth, in front of the back-brand to give substance, blazed a fire of thorns, that crackled "like the laughter of the fool."

Nineteen persons were gathered here. Of these, five women, wearing gowns of various bright hues, sat in chairs along the wall; girls shy and not shy filled the window-bench; four men, including Charley Jake the hedge-carpenter, Elijah New the parish-clerk, and John Pitcher, a neighboring dairyman, the shepherd's father-in-law, lolled in the settle; a young man and maid, who were blushing over tentative *pourparlers* on a life-companionship, sat beneath the corner-cupboard; and an elderly engaged man of fifty or upward moved restlessly about from spots where his betrothed was not to the spot where she was. Enjoyment was pretty general, and so much the more prevailed in being unhampered by conventional restrictions. Absolute

confidence in each other's good opinion begat perfect ease, while the finishing stroke of manner, amounting to a truly princely serenity, was lent to the majority by the absence of any expression or trait denoting that they wished to get on in the world, enlarge their minds, or do any eclipsing thing whatever—which nowadays so generally nips the bloom and *bonhomie* of all except the two extremes of the social scale.

Shepherd Fennel had married well, his wife being a dairyman's daughter from a vale at a distance, who brought fifty guineas in her pocket—and kept them there, till they should be required for ministering to the needs of a coming family. This frugal woman had been somewhat exercised as to the character that should be given to the gathering. A sit-still party had its advantages; but an undisturbed position of ease in chairs and settles was apt to lead on the men to such an unconscionable deal of toping that they would sometimes fairly drink the house dry. A dancing-party was the alternative; but this, while avoiding the foregoing objection on the score of good drink, had a counterbalancing disadvantage in the matter of good victuals, the ravenous appetites engendered by the exercise causing immense havoc in the buttery. Shepherdess Fennel fell back upon the intermediate plan of mingling short dances with short periods of talk and singing, so as to hinder any ungovernable rage in either. But this scheme was entirely confined to her own gentle mind: the shepherd himself was in the mood to exhibit the most reckless phases of hospitality.

The fiddler was a boy of those parts, about twelve years of age, who had a wonderful dexterity in jigs and reels, tho his fingers were so small and short as to necessitate a constant shifting for the high notes, from

which he scrambled back to the first position with sounds not of unmixed purity of tone. At seven the shrill tweedle-dee of this youngster had begun, accompanied by a booming ground-bass from Elijah New, the parish-clerk, who had thoughtfully brought with him his favorite musical instrument, the serpent. Dancing was instantaneous, Mrs. Fennel privately enjoining the players on no account to let the dance exceed the length of a quarter of an hour.

But Elijah and the boy, in the excitement of their position, quite forgot the injunction. Moreover, Oliver Giles, a man of seventeen, one of the dancers, who was enamored of his partner, a fair girl of thirty-three rolling years, had recklessly handed a new crown-piece to the musicians, as a bribe to keep going as long as they had muscle and wind. Mrs. Fennel, seeing the steam begin to generate on the countenances of her guests, crossed over and touched the fiddler's elbow and put her hand on the serpent's mouth. But they took no notice, and fearing she might lose her character of genial hostess if she were to interfere too markedly, she retired and sat down helpless. And so the dance whizzed on with cumulative fury, the performers moving in their planet-like courses, direct and retrograde, from apogee to perigee, till the hands of the well-kicked clock at the bottom of the room had travelled over the circumference of an hour.

While these cheerful events were in course of enactment within Fennel's pastoral dwelling, an incident having considerable bearing on the party had occurred in the gloomy night without. Mrs. Fennel's concern about the growing fierceness of the dance corresponded in point of time with the ascent of a human figure to the solitary hill of Higher Crowstairs from the direc-

tion of the distant town. This personage strode on through the rain without a pause, following the little-worn path which, further on in its course, skirted the shepherd's cottage.

It was nearly the time of full moon, and on this account, tho the sky was lined with a uniform sheet of dripping cloud, ordinary objects out of doors were readily visible. The sad wan light revealed the lonely pedestrian to be a man of supple frame; his gait suggested that he had somewhat passed the period of perfect and instinctive agility, tho not so far as to be otherwise than rapid of motion when occasion required. At a rough guess, he might have been about forty years of age. He appeared tall, but a recruiting sergeant, or other person accustomed to the judging of men's heights by the eye, would have discerned that this was chiefly owing to his gauntness, and that he was not more than five-feet-eight or nine.

Notwithstanding the regularity of his tread, there was caution in it, as in that of one who mentally feels his way; and despite the fact that it was not a black coat nor a dark garment of any sort that he wore, there was something about him which suggested that he naturally belonged to the black-coated tribes of men. His clothes were of fustian, and his boots hobnailed, yet in his progress he showed not the mud-accustomed bearing of hobnailed and fustianed peasantry.

By the time that he had arrived abreast of the shepherd's premises the rain came down, or rather came along, with yet more determined violence. The outskirts of the little settlement partially broke the force of wind and rain, and this induced him to stand still. The most salient of the shepherd's domestic erections was an empty sty at the forward corner of his hedge-

less garden, for in these latitudes the principle of masking the homelier features of your establishment by a conventional frontage was unknown. The traveller's eye was attracted to this small building by the pallid shine of the wet slates that covered it. He turned aside, and, finding it empty, stood under the pent-roof for shelter.

While he stood, the boom of the serpent within the adjacent house, and the lesser strains of the fiddler, reached the spot as an accompaniment to the surging hiss of the flying rain on the sod, its louder beating on the cabbage-leaves of the garden, on the eight or ten beehives just discernible by the path, and its dripping from the eaves into a row of buckets and pans that had been placed under the walls of the cottage. For at Higher Crowstairs, as at all such elevated domiciles, the grand difficulty of housekeeping was an insufficiency of water; and a casual rainfall was utilized by turning out, as catchers, every utensil that the house contained. Some queer stories might be told of the contrivances for economy in suds and dish-waters that are absolutely necessitated in upland habitations during the droughts of summer. But at this season there were no such exigencies; a mere acceptance of what the skies bestowed was sufficient for an abundant store.

At last the notes of the serpent ceased and the house was silent. This cessation of activity aroused the solitary pedestrian from the reverie into which he had lapsed, and, emerging from the shed, with an apparently new intention, he walked up the path to the house-door. Arrived here, his first act was to kneel down on a large stone beside the row of vessels, and to drink a copious draft from one of them. Having quenched his thirst, he rose and lifted his hand to

knock, but paused with his eye upon the panel. Since the dark surface of the wood revealed absolutely nothing, it was evident that he must be mentally looking through the door, as if he wished to measure thereby all the possibilities that a house of this sort might include, and how they might bear upon the question of his entry.

In his indecision he turned and surveyed the scene around. Not a soul was anywhere visible. The garden-path stretched downward from his feet, gleaming like the track of a snail; the roof of the little well (mostly dry), the well-cover, the top rail of the garden-gate, were varnished with the same dull liquid glaze; while, far away in the vale, a faint whiteness of more than usual extent showed that the rivers were high in the meads. Beyond all this winked a few bleared lamplights through the beating drops—lights that denoted the situation of the county-town from which he had appeared to come. The absence of all notes of life in that direction seemed to clinch his intentions, and he knocked at the door.

Within, a desultory chat had taken the place of movement and musical sound. The hedge-carpenter was suggesting a song to the company, which nobody just then was inclined to undertake, so that the knock afforded a not unwelcome diversion.

"Walk in!" said the shepherd promptly.

The latch clicked upward, and out of the night our pedestrian appeared up the door-mat. The shepherd arose, snuffed two of the nearest candles, and turned to look at him.

Their light disclosed that the stranger was dark in complexion and not unprepossessing as to feature. His hat, which for a moment he did not remove, hung

low over his eyes, without concealing that they were large, open, and determined, moving with a flash rather than a glance round the room. He seemed pleased with his survey, and, baring his shaggy head, said, in a rich, deep voice, "The rain is so heavy, friends, that I ask leave to come in and rest awhile."

"To be sure, stranger," said the shepherd. "And faith, you've been lucky in choosing your time, for we are having a bit of a fling for a glad cause—tho, to be sure, a man could hardly wish that glad cause to happen more than once a year."

"Nor less," spoke up a woman. "For 'tis best to get your family over and done with, as soon as you can, so as to be all the earlier out of the fag o't."

"And what may be this glad cause?" asked the stranger.

"A birth and christening," said the shepherd.

The stranger hoped his host might not be made unhappy either by too many or too few of such episodes, and being invited by a gesture to a pull at the mug, he readily acquiesced. His manner, which, before entering, had been so dubious, was now altogether that of a careless and candid man.

"Late to be traipsing athwart this coomb—hey?" said the engaged man of fifty.

"Late it is, master, as you say.—I'll take a seat in the chimney-corner, if you have nothing to urge against it, ma'am; for I am a little moist on the side that was next the rain."

Mrs. Shepherd Fennel assented, and made room for the self-invited comer, who, having got completely inside the chimney-corner, stretched out his legs and his arms with the expansiveness of a person quite at home.

"Yes, I am rather cracked in the vamp," he said freely, seeing that the eyes of the shepherd's wife fell upon his boots, "and I am not well fitted either. I have had some rough times lately, and have been forced to pick up what I can get in the way of wearing, but I must find a suit better fit for working-days when I reach home."

"One of hereabouts?" she inquired.

"Not quite that—further up the country."

"I thought so. And so be I; and by your tongue you come from my neighborhood."

"But you would hardly have heard of me," he said quickly. "My time would be long before yours, ma'am, you see."

This testimony to the youthfulness of his hostess had the effect of stopping her cross-examination.

"There is only one thing more wanted to make me happy," continued the new-comer. "And that is a little baccy, which I am sorry to say I am out of."

"I'll fill your pipe," said the shepherd.

"I must ask you to lend me a pipe likewise."

"A smoker, and no pipe about 'ee?"

"I have dropped it somewhere on the road."

The shepherd filled and handed him a new clay pipe, saying, as he did so, "Hand me your baccy box—I'll fill that too, now I am about it."

The man went through the movement of searching his pockets.

"Lost that too?" said his entertainer, with some surprise.

"I am afraid so," said the man with some confusion. "Give it to me in a screw of paper." Lighting his pipe at the candle with a suction that drew the whole flame into the bowl, he resettled himself in the corner and

bent his looks upon the faint steam from his damp legs, as if he wished to say no more.

Meanwhile the general body of guests had been taking little notice of this visitor by reason of an absorbing discussion in which they were engaged with the band about a tune for the next dance. The matter being settled, they were about to stand up when an interruption came in the shape of another knock at the door.

At sound of the same the man in the chimney-corner took up the poker and began stirring the brands as if doing it thoroughly were the one aim of his existence; and a second time the shepherd said, "Walk in!" In a moment another man stood upon the straw-woven door-mat. He too was a stranger.

This individual was one of a type radically different from the first. There was more of the commonplace in his manner, and a certain jovial cosmopolitanism sat upon his features. He was several years older than the first arrival, his hair being slightly frosted, his eyebrows bristly, and his whiskers cut back from his cheeks. His face was rather full and flabby, and yet it was not altogether a face without power. A few grog-blossoms marked the neighborhood of his nose. He flung back his long drab greatcoat, revealing that beneath it he wore a suit of cinder-gray shade throughout, large heavy seals, of some metal or other that would take a polish, dangling from his fob as his only personal ornament. Shaking the water-drops from his low-crowned glazed hat, he said, "I must ask for a few minutes' shelter, comrades, or I shall be wetted to my skin before I get to Casterbridge."

"Make yourself at home, master," said the shepherd, perhaps a trifle less heartily than on the first occasion.

Not that Fennel had the least tinge of niggardliness in his composition; but the room was far from large, spare chairs were not numerous, and damp companions were not altogether desirable at close quarters for the women and girls in their bright-colored gowns.

However, the second comer, after taking off his greatcoat, and hanging his hat on a nail in one of the ceiling-beams as if he had been specially invited to put it there, advanced and sat down at the table. This had been pushed so closely into the chimney-corner, to give all available room to the dancers, that its inner edge grazed the elbow of the man who had ensconced himself by the fire; and thus the two strangers were brought into close companionship. They nodded to each other by way of breaking the ice of unacquaintance, and the first stranger handed his neighbor the family mug—a huge vessel of brown ware, having its upper edge worn away like a threshold by the rub of whole generations of thirsty lips that had gone the way of all flesh, and bearing the following inscription burnt upon its rotund side in yellow letters:—

THERE IS NO FUN
UNTILL I CUM

The other man, nothing loth, raised the mug to his lips, and drank on, and on, and on—till a curious blueness overspread the countenance of the shepherd's wife, who had regarded with no little surprize the first stranger's free offer to the second of what did not belong to him to dispense.

"I knew it!" said the toper to the shepherd with much satisfaction. "When I walked up your garden

before coming in, and saw the hives all of a row, I said to myself, 'Where's there's bees there's honey, and where there's honey there's mead.' But mead of such a truly comfortable sort as this I really didn't expect to meet in my older days." He took yet another pull at the mug, till it assumed an ominous elevation.

"Glad you enjoy it!" said the shepherd warmly.

"It is goodish mead," assented Mrs. Fennel, with an absence of enthusiasm which seemed to say that it was possible to buy praise for one's cellar at too heavy a price. "It is trouble enough to make—and really I hardly think we shall make any more. For honey sells well, and we ourselves can make shift with a drop o' small mead and metheglin for common use from the comb-washings."

"O, but you'll never have the heart!" reproachfully cried the stranger in cinder-gray, after taking up the mug a third time and setting it down empty. "I love mead, when 'tis old like this, as I love to go to church o' Sundays, or to relieve the needy any day of the week."

"Ha, ha, ha!" said the man in the chimney-corner, who, in spite of the taciturnity induced by the pipe of tobacco, could not or would not refrain from this slight testimony to his comrade's humor.

Now the old mead of those days, brewed of the purest first-year or maiden honey, four pounds to the gallon—with its due complement of white of eggs, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, mace, rosemary, yeast, and processes of working, bottling, and cellaring—tasted remarkably strong; but it did not taste so strong as it actually was. Hence, presently, the stranger in cinder-gray at the table, moved by its creeping influence, unbuttoned his waistcoat, threw himself back in his

chair, spread his legs, and made his presence felt in various ways.

"Well, well, as I say," he resumed, "I am going to Casterbridge, and to Casterbridge I must go. I should have been almost there by this time; but the rain drove me into your dwelling, and I'm not sorry for it."

"You don't live in Casterbridge?" said the shepherd.

"Not as yet; tho I shortly mean to move there."

"Going to set up in trade, perhaps?"

"No, no," said the shepherd's wife. "It is easy to see that the gentleman is rich, and don't want to work at anything."

The cinder-gray stranger paused, as if to consider whether he would accept that definition of himself. He presently rejected it by answering, "Rich is not quite the word for me, dame. I do work, and I must work. And even if I only get to Casterbridge by midnight I must begin work there at eight to-morrow morning. Yes, het or wet, blow or snow, famine or sword, my day's work to-morrow must be done."

"Poor man! Then, in spite o' seeming, you be worse off than we?" replied the shepherd's wife.

" 'Tis the nature of my trade, men and maidens. 'Tis the nature of my trade more than my poverty. . . . But really and truly I must up and off, or I shan't get a lodging in the town." However, the speaker did not move, and directly added, "There's time for one more draft of friendship before I go; and I'd perform it at once if the mug were not dry."

"Here's a mug o' small," said Mrs. Fennel. "Small, we call it, tho to be sure 'tis only the first wash o' the combs."

"No," said the stranger disdainfully. "I won't spoil your first kindness by partaking o' your second."

"Certainly not," broke in Fennel. "We don't increase and multiply every day, and I'll fill the mug again." He went away to the dark place under the stairs where the barrel stood. The shepherdess followed him.

"Why should you do this?" she said reproachfully, as soon as they were alone. "He's emptied it once. tho it held enough for ten people; and now he's not contented wi' the small, but must needs call for more o' the strong! And a stranger unbeknown to any of us. For my part, I don't like the look o' the man at all."

"But he's in the house, my honey; and 'tis a wet night, and a christening. Daze it, what's a cup of mead more or less? There'll be plenty more next bee-burning."

"Very well—this time, then," she answered, looking wistfully at the barrel. "But what is the man's calling, and where is he one of, that he should come in and join us like this?"

"I don't know. I'll ask him again."

The catastrophe of having the mug drained dry at one pull by the stranger in cinder-gray was effectually guarded against this time by Mrs. Fennel. She poured out his allowance in a small cup, keeping the large one at a discreet distance from him. When he had tossed off his portion the shepherd renewed his inquiry about the stranger's occupation.

The latter did not immediately reply, and the man in the chimney-corner, with sudden demonstrativeness, said, "Anybody may know my trade—I'm a wheel-wright."

"A very good trade for these parts," said the shepherd.

"And anybody may know mine—if they've the sense to find it out," said the stranger in cinder-gray.

"You may generally tell what a man is by his claws," observed the hedge-carpenter, looking at his own hands. "My fingers be as full of thorns as an old pin-cushion is of pins."

The hands of the man in the chimney-corner instinctively sought the shade, and he gazed into the fire as he resumed his pipe. The man at the table took up the hedge-carpenter's remark, and added smartly, "True; but the oddity of my trade is that, instead of setting a mark upon me, it sets a mark upon my customers."

No observation being offered by anybody in elucidation of this enigma, the shepherd's wife once more called for a song. The same obstacles presented themselves as at the former time—one had no voice, another had forgotten the first verse. The stranger at the table, whose soul had now risen to a good working temperature, relieved the difficulty by exclaiming that, to start the company, he would sing himself. Thrusting one thumb into the arm-hole of his waistcoat, he waved the other hand in the air, and, with an extemporizing gaze at the shining sheep-crooks above the mantelpiece, began:—

"O my trade it is the rarest one,
Simple shepherds all—
My trade is a sight to see;
For my customers I tie, and take them up on high,
And waft 'em to a far countree!"

The room was silent when he had finished the verse—with one exception, that of the man in the chimney-corner, who, at the singer's word, "Chorus!" joined him in a deep bass voice of musical relish—

"And waft 'em to a far countree!"

Oliver Giles, John Pitcher the dairyman, the parish-clerk, the engaged man of fifty, the row of young women against the wall, seemed lost in thought not of the gayest kind. The shepherd looked meditatively on the ground, the shepherdess gazed keenly at the singer, and with some suspicion; she was doubting whether this stranger were merely singing an old song from recollection, or was composing one there and then for the occasion. All were as perplexed at the obscure revelation as the guests at Belshazzar's Feast, except the man in the chimney-corner, who quietly said, "Second verse, stranger," and smoked on.

The singer thoroughly moistened himself from his lips inwards, and went on with the next stanza as requested:—

"My tools are but common ones,
Simple shepherds all—
My tools are no sight to see:
A little hempen string, and a post whereon to swing,
Are implements enough for me!"

Shepherd Fennel glanced round. There was no longer any doubt that the stranger was answering his question rhythmically. The guests one and all started back with suppressed exclamations. The young woman engaged to the man of fifty fainted half-way, and would have proceeded, but finding him wanting in alacrity for catching her she sat down trembling.

"O, he's the ——!" whispered the people in the background, mentioning the name of an ominous public officer. "He's come to do it! 'Tis to be at Casterbridge jail to-morrow—the man for sheep-stealing—the poor clock-maker we heard of, who used to live away at Shottsford and had no work to do—Timothy Summers, whose family were a-starving, and so he went out of Shottsford by the high-road, and took a sheep

in open daylight, defying the farmer and the farmer's wife and the farmer's lad, and every man jack among 'em. He" (and they nodded towards the stranger of the deadly trade) "is come from up the country to do it because there's not enough to do in his own county-town, and he's got the place here now our own county man's dead; he's going to live in the same cottage under the prison wall."

The stranger in cinder-gray took no notice of this whispered string of observations, but again wetted his lips. Seeing that his friend in the chimney-corner was the only one who reciprocated his joviality in any way, he held out his cup towards that appreciative comrade, who also held out his own. They clinked together, the eyes of the rest of the room hanging upon the singer's actions. He parted his lips for the third verse; but at that moment another knock was audible upon the door. This time the knock was faint and hesitating.

The company seemed scared; the shepherd looked with consternation towards the entrance, and it was with some effort that he resisted his alarmed wife's deprecatory glance, and uttered for the third time the welcoming words, "Walk in!"

The door was gently opened, and another man stood upon the mat. He, like those who had preceded him, was a stranger. This time it was a short, small personage, of fair complexion, and dressed in a decent suit of dark clothes.

"Can you tell me the way to——?" he began: when, gazing round the room to observe the nature of the company amongst whom he had fallen, his eyes lighted on the stranger in cinder-gray. It was just at the instant when the latter, who had thrown his mind into his song with such a will that he scarcely heeded the

interruption, silenced all whispers and inquiries by bursting into his third verse:—

"To-morrow is my working day,
Simple shepherds all—
To-morrow is a working day for me:
For the farmer's sheep is slain, and the lad who did it ta'en,
And on his soul may God ha' merc-y!"

The stranger in the chimney-corner, waving cups with the singer so heartily that his mead splashed over on the hearth, repeated in his bass voice as before:—

"And on his soul may God ha' merc-y!"

All this time the third stranger had been standing in the doorway. Finding now that he did not come forward or go on speaking, the guests particularly regarded him. They noticed to their surprise that he stood before them the picture of abject terror—his knees trembling, his hand shaking so violently that the door-latch by which he supported himself rattled audibly: his white lips were parted, and his eyes fixed on the merry officer of justice in the middle of the room. A moment more and he had turned, closed the door, and fled.

"What a man can it be?" said the shepherd.

The rest, between the awfulness of their late discovery and the odd conduct of this third visitor, looked as if they knew not what to think, and said nothing. Instinctively they withdrew further and further from the grim gentleman in their midst, whom some of them seemed to take for the Prince of Darkness himself, till they formed a remote circle, an empty space of floor being left between them and him—

". . . circulus, cujus centrum diabolus."

The room was so silent—tho there were more than twenty people in it—that nothing could be heard but

the patter of the rain against the window-shutters, accompanied by the occasional hiss of a stray drop that fell down the chimney into the fire, and the steady puffing of the man in the corner, who had now resumed his pipe of long clay.

The stillness was unexpectedly broken. The distant sound of a gun reverberated through the air—apparently from the direction of the county-town.

"Be jiggered!" cried the stranger who had sung the song, jumping up.

"What does that mean?" asked several.

"A prisoner escaped from the jail—that's what it means."

All listened. The sound was repeated, and none of them spoke but the man in the chimney-corner, who said quietly, "I've often been told that in this county they fire a gun at such times; but I never heard it till now."

"I wonder if it is *my* man?" murmured the personage in cinder-gray.

"Surely it is!" said the shepherd involuntarily. "And surely we've zeed him! That little man who looked in at the door by now, and quivered like a leaf when he zeed ye and heard your song!"

"His teeth chattered, and the breath went out of his body," said the dairyman.

"And his heart seemed to sink within him like a stone," said Oliver Giles.

"And he bolted as if he'd been shot at," said the hedge-carpenter.

"True—his teeth chattered, and his heart seemed to sink; and he bolted as if he'd been shot at," slowly summed up the man in the chimney-corner.

"I didn't notice it," remarked the hangman.

"We were all a-wondering what made him run off in such a fright," faltered one of the women against the wall, "and now 'tis explained!"

The firing of the alarm-gun went on at intervals, low and sullenly, and their suspicions became a certainty. The sinister gentleman in cinder-gray roused himself. "Is there a constable here?" he asked, in thick tones. "If so, let him step forward."

The engaged man of fifty stepped quavering out from the wall, his betrothed beginning to sob on the back of the chair.

"You are a sworn constable?"

"I be, sir."

"Then pursue the criminal at once, with assistance, and bring him back here. He can't have gone far."

"I will, sir, I will—when I've got my staff. I'll go home and get it, and come sharp here, and start in a body."

"Staff!—never mind your staff; the man'll be gone!"

"But I can't do nothing without my staff—can I, William, and John, and Charles Jake? No; for there's the king's royal crown a painted on en in yaller and gold, and the lion and the unicorn, so as when I raise en up and hit my prisoner, 'tis made a lawful blow thereby. I wouldn't 'tempt to take up a man without my staff—no, not I. If I hadn't the law to gie me courage, why, instead o' my taking up him he might take up me!"

"Now, I'm a king's man myself, and can give you authority enough for this," said the formidable officer in gray. "Now then, all of ye, be ready. Have ye any lanterns?"

"Yes—have ye any lanterns?—I demand it!" said the constable.

"And the rest of you able-bodied——"

"Able-bodied men—yes—the rest of ye!" said the constable.

"Have you some good stout staves and pitchforks——"

"Staves and pitchforks—in the name o' the law! And take 'em in yer hands and go in quest, and do as we in authority tell ye!"

Thus aroused, the men prepared to give chase. The evidence was, indeed, tho circumstantial, so convincing, that but little argument was needed to show the shepherd's guests that after what they had seen it would look very much like connivance if they did not instantly pursue the unhappy third stranger, who could not as yet have gone more than a few hundred yards over such uneven country.

A shepherd is always well provided with lanterns; and, lighting these hastily, and with hurdle-staves in their hands, they poured out of the door, taking a direction along the crest of the hill, away from the town, the rain having fortunately a little abated.

Disturbed by the noise, or possibly by unpleasant dreams of her baptism, the child who had been christened began to cry heart-brokenly in the room overhead. These notes of grief came down through the chinks of the floor to the ears of the women below, who jumped up one by one, and seemed glad of the excuse to ascend and comfort the baby, for the incidents of the last half-hour greatly oppressed them. Thus in the space of two or three minutes the room on the ground-floor was deserted quite.

But it was not for long. Hardly had the sound of footsteps died away when a man returned round the corner of the house from the direction the pursuers

had taken. Peeping in at the door, and seeing nobody there, he entered leisurely. It was the stranger of the chimney-corner, who had gone out with the rest. The motive of his return was shown by his helping himself to a cut piece of skimmer-cake that lay on a ledge beside where he had sat, and which he had apparently forgotten to take with him. He also poured out half a cup more mead from the quantity that remained, ravenously eating and drinking these as he stood. He had not finished when another figure came in just as quietly—his friend in cinder-gray.

"O—you here?" said the latter, smiling. "I thought you had gone to help in the capture." And this speaker also revealed the object of his return by looking solicitously round for the fascinating mug of old mead.

"And I thought you had gone," said the other, continuing his skimmer-cake with some effort.

"Well, on second thoughts, I felt there were enough without me," said the first confidentially, "and such a night as it is, too. Besides, 'tis the business o' the Government to take care of its criminals—not mine."

"True; so it is. And I felt as you did, that there were enough without me."

"I don't want to break my limbs running over the humps and hollows of this wild country."

"Nor I neither, between you and me."

"These shepherd-people are used to it—simple-minded souls, you know, stirred up to anything in a moment. They'll have him ready for me before the morning, and no trouble to me at all."

"They'll have him, and we shall have saved ourselves all labor in the matter."

"True, true. Well, my way is to Casterbridge; and

'tis as much as my legs will do to take me that far. Going the same way?"

"No, I am sorry to say! I have to get home over there" (he nodded indefinitely to the right), "and I feel as you do, that it is quite enough for my legs to do before bedtime."

The other had by this time finished the mead in the mug, after which, shaking hands heartily at the door, and wishing each other well, they went their several ways.

In the meantime the company of pursuers had reached the end of the hog's-back elevation which dominated this part of the down. They had decided on no particular plan of action; and, finding that the man of the baleful trade was no longer in their company, they seemed quite unable to form any such plan now. They descended in all directions down the hill, and straightway several of the party fell into the snare set by Nature for all misguided midnight ramblers over this part of the cretaceous formation. The "lanchets," or flint slopes, which belted the escarpment at intervals of a dozen yards, took the less cautious ones unawares, and losing their footing on the rubbly steep they slid sharply downwards, the lanterns rolling from their hands to the bottom, and there lying on their sides till the horn was scorched through.

When they had again gathered themselves together, the shepherd, as the man who knew the country best, took the lead, and guided them round these treacherous inclines. The lanterns, which seemed rather to dazzle their eyes and warn the fugitive than to assist them in the exploration, were extinguished, due silence was observed; and in this more rational order they plunged into the vale. It was a grassy, briery, moist defile, affording some shelter to any person who had sought

it; but the party perambulated it in vain, and ascended on the other side. Here they wandered apart, and after an interval closed together again to report progress. At the second time of closing in they found themselves near a lonely ash, the single tree on this part of the coomb, probably sown there by a passing bird some fifty years before. And here, standing a little to one side of the trunk, as motionless as the trunk itself, appeared the man they were in quest of, his outline being well defined against the sky beyond. The band noiselessly drew up and faced him.

"Your money or your life!" said the constable sternly to the still figure.

"No, no," whispered John Pitcher. " 'Tisn't our side ought to say that. That's the doctrine of vagabonds like him, and we be on the side of the law."

"Well, well," replied the constable impatiently; "I must say something, mustn't I? and if you had all the weight o' this undertaking upon your mind, perhaps you'd say the wrong thing too!—Prisoner at the bar, surrender, in the name of the Father—the Crown, I mane!"

The man under the tree seemed now to notice them for the first time, and, giving them no opportunity whatever for exhibiting their courage, he strolled slowly towards them. He was, indeed, the little man, the third stranger; but his trepidation had in a great measure gone.

"Well, travellers," he said, "did I hear ye speak to me?"

"You did: you've got to come and be our prisoner at once!" said the constable. "We arrest 'ee on the charge of not biding in Casterbridge jail in a decent proper manner to be hung to-morrow morning. Neighbors, do your duty, and seize the culpet!"

On hearing the charge, the man seemed enlightened, and, saying not another word, resigned himself with preternatural civility to the search-party, who, with their staves in their hands, surrounded him on all sides, and marched him back towards the shepherd's cottage.

It was eleven o'clock by the time they arrived. The light shining from the open door, a sound of men's voices within, proclaimed to them as they approached the house that some new events had arisen in their absence. On entering they discovered the shepherd's living room to be invaded by two officers from Casterbridge jail, and a well-known magistrate who lived at the nearest country-seat, intelligence of the escape having become generally circulated.

"Gentlemen," said the constable, "I have brought back your man—not without risk and danger; but every one must do his duty! He is inside this circle of able-bodied persons, who have lent me useful aid, considering their ignorance of Crown work. Men, bring forward your prisoner!" And the third stranger was led to the light.

"Who is this?" said one of the officials.

"The man," said the constable.

"Certainly not," said the turnkey; and the first corroborated his statement.

"But how can it be otherwise?" asked the constable. "Or why was he so terrified at sight o' the singing instrument of the law who sat there?" Here he related the strange behavior of the third stranger on entering the house during the hangman's song.

"Can't understand it," said the officer coolly. "All I know is that it is not the condemned man. He's quite a different character from this one; a gauntish fellow, with dark hair and eyes, rather good-looking.

and with a musical bass voice that if you heard it once you'd never mistake as long as you lived."

"Why, souls—'twas the man in the chimney-corner!"

"Hey—what?" said the magistrate, coming forward after inquiring particulars from the shepherd in the background. "Haven't you got the man after all?"

"Well, sir," said the constable, "he's the man we were in search of, that's true; and yet he's not the man we were in search of. For the man we were in search of was not the man we wanted, sir, if you understand my every-day way; for 'twas the man in the chimney-corner!"

"A pretty kettle of fish altogether!" said the magistrate. "You had better start for the other man at once."

The prisoner now spoke for the first time. The mention of the man in the chimney-corner seemed to have moved him as nothing else could do. "Sir," he said, stepping forward to the magistrate, "take no more trouble about me. The time is come when I may as well speak. I have done nothing; my crime is that the condemned man is my brother. Early this afternoon I left home at Shottsford to tramp it all the way to Casterbridge jail to bid him farewell. I was benighted, and called here to rest and ask the way. When I opened the door I saw before me the very man, my brother, that I thought to see in the condemned cell at Casterbridge. He was in this chimney-corner; and jammed close to him, so that he could not have got out if he had tried, was the executioner who'd come to take his life, singing a song about it and not knowing that it was his victim who was close by, joining in to save appearances. My brother looked a glance of agony at me, and I knew he meant, "Don't

reveal what you see; my life depends on it." I was so terror-struck that I could hardly stand, and, not knowing what I did, I turned and hurried away."

The narrator's manner and tone had the stamp of truth, and his story made a great impression on all around. "And do you know where your brother is at the present time?" asked the magistrate.

"I do not. I have never seen him since I closed this door."

"I can testify to that, for we've been between ye ever since," said the constable.

"Where does he think to fly to?—what is his occupation?"

"He's a watch-and-clock-maker, sir."

" 'A said 'a was a wheelwright—a wicked rogue," said the constable.

"The wheels of clocks and watches he meant, no doubt," said Shepherd Fennel. "I thought his hands were palish for's trade."

"Well, it appears to me that nothing can be gained by retaining this poor man in custody," said the magistrate; "your business lies with the other unquestionably."

And so the little man was released off-hand; but he looked nothing the less sad on that account, it being beyond the power of magistrate or constable to raze out the written troubles in his brain, for they concerned another whom he regarded with more solicitude than himself. When this was done, and the man had gone his way, the night was found to be so far advanced that it was deemed useless to renew the search before the next morning.

Next day, accordingly, the quest for the clever sheep-stealer became general and keen, to all appearances at least. But the intended punishment was

cruelly disproportioned to the transgression, and the sympathy of a great many country-folk in that district was strongly on the side of the fugitive. Moreover, his marvellous coolness and daring in hob-and-nobbing with the hangman, under the unprecedented circumstances of the shepherd's party, won their admiration. So that it may be questioned if all those who ostensibly made themselves so busy in exploring woods and fields and lanes were quite so thorough when it came to the private examination of their own lofts and outhouses. Stories were afloat of a mysterious figure being occasionally seen in some old overgrown trackway or other, remote from turnpike roads; but when a search was instituted in any of these suspected quarters nobody was found. Thus the days and weeks passed without tidings.

In brief, the bass-voiced man of the chimney-corner was never recaptured. Some said that he went across the sea, others that he did not, but buried himself in the depths of a populous city. At any rate, the gentleman in cinder-gray never did his morning's work at Casterbridge, nor met anywhere at all, for business purposes, the genial comrade with whom he had passed an hour of relaxation in the lonely house on the coomb.

The grass has long been green on the graves of Shepherd Fennel and his frugal wife; the guests who made up the christening party have mainly followed their entertainers to the tomb; the baby in whose honor they all had met is a matron in the sere and yellow leaf. But the arrival of the three strangers at the shepherd's that night, and the details connected therewith, is a story as well known as ever in the country about Higher Crowstairs.

March, 1883.

THE GOLD BUG

By Edgar Allan Poe

What ho! what ho! this fellow is dancing mad!
He hath been bitten by the Tarantula.
—*All in the Wrong*

Many years ago, I contracted an intimacy with a Mr. William Legrand. He was of an ancient Huguenot family, and had once been wealthy; but a series of misfortunes had reduced him to want. To avoid the mortification consequent upon his disasters, he left New Orleans, the city of his forefathers, and took up his residence at Sullivan's Island, near Charleston, South Carolina.

This island is a very singular one. It consists of little else than the sea sand, and is about three miles long. Its breadth at no point exceeds a quarter of a mile. It is separated from the mainland by a scarcely perceptible creek, oozing its way through a wilderness of reeds and slime, a favorite resort of the marsh-hen. The vegetation, as might be supposed, is scant, or at least dwarfish. No trees of any magnitude are to be seen. Near the western extremity, where Fort Moultrie stands, and where are some miserable frame buildings, tenanted, during the summer, by the fugitives from Charleston dust and fever, may be found, indeed, the bristly palmetto; but the whole island, with the exception of this western point, and a line of hard, white beach on the seacoast, is covered with a dense under-

growth of the sweet myrtle so much prized by the horticulturists of England. The shrub here often attains the height of fifteen or twenty feet, and forms an almost impenetrable coppice, burdening the air with its fragrance.

In the inmost recesses of this coppice, not far from the eastern or more remote end of the island, Legrand had built himself a small hut, which he occupied when I first, by mere accident, made his acquaintance. This soon ripened into friendship—for there was much in the recluse to excite interest and esteem. I found him well educated, with unusual powers of mind, but infected with misanthropy, and subject to perverse moods of alternate enthusiasm and melancholy. He had with him many books, but rarely employed them. His chief amusements were gunning and fishing, or sauntering along the beach and through the myrtles, in quest of shells or entomological specimens—his collection of the latter might have been envied by a Swammerdamm. In these excursions he was usually accompanied by an old negro, called Jupiter, who had been manumitted before the reverses of the family, but who could be induced, neither by threats nor by promises, to abandon what he considered his right of attendance upon the footsteps of his young "Massa Will." It is not improbable that the relatives of Legrand, conceiving him to be somewhat unsettled in intellect, had contrived to instil this obstinacy into Jupiter, with a view to the supervision and guardianship of the wanderer.

The winters in the latitude of Sullivan's Island are seldom very severe, and in the fall of the year it is a rare event indeed when a fire is considered necessary. About the middle of October, 18—, there occurred,

however, a day of remarkable chilliness. Just before sunset I scrambled my way through the evergreens to the hut of my friend, whom I had not visited for several weeks—my residence being, at that time, in Charleston, a distance of nine miles from the island, while the facilities of passage and re-passage were very far behind those of the present day. Upon reaching the hut I rapped, as was my custom, and getting no reply, sought for the key where I knew it was secreted, unlocked the door, and went in. A fine fire was blazing upon the hearth. It was a novelty, and by no means an ungrateful one. I threw off an overcoat, took an armchair by the crackling logs, and awaited patiently the arrival of my hosts.

Soon after dark they arrived, and gave me a most cordial welcome. Jupiter, grinning from ear to ear, bustled about to prepare some marsh-hens for supper. Legrand was in one of his fits—how else shall I term them?—of enthusiasm. He had found an unknown bivalve, forming a new genus, and, more than this, he had hunted down and secured, with Jupiter's assistance, a *scarabaeus* which he believed to be totally new, but in respect to which he wished to have my opinion on the morrow.

"And why not to-night?" I asked, rubbing my hands over the blaze, and wishing the whole tribe of *scarabaei* at the devil.

"Ah, if I had only known you were here!" said Legrand, "but it's so long since I saw you; and how could I foresee that you would pay me a visit this very night, of all others? As I was coming home I met Lieutenant G——, from the fort, and, very foolishly, I lent him the bug; so it will be impossible for you to see it until the morning. Stay here to-night

and I will send Jup down for it at sunrise. It is the loveliest thing in creation!"

"What?—sunrise?"

"Nonsense! no!—the bug. It is of a brilliant gold color—about the size of a large hickory-nut—with two jet-black spots near one extremity of the back, and another, somewhat longer, at the other. The *antennae* are—"

"Dey ain't no tin in him, Massa Will, I keep a tellin' on you," here interrupted Jupiter; "de bug is a goole-bug, solid, ebery bit of him, inside and all, sep him wing—neber feel half so hebby a bug in my life."

"Well, suppose it is, Jup," replied Legrand, somewhat more earnestly, it seemed to me, than the case demanded: "is that any reason for you letting the birds burn? The color"—here he turned to me—"is really almost enough to warrant Jupiter's idea. You never saw a more brilliant metallic luster than the scales emit—but of this you cannot judge till to-morrow. In the meantime I can give you some idea of the shape." Saying this, he seated himself at a small table, on which were a pen and ink, but no paper. He looked for some in a drawer, but found none.

"Never mind," he said at length, "this will answer"; and he drew from his waistcoat pocket a scrap of what I took to be very dirty foolscap, and made upon it a rough drawing with the pen. While he did this, I retained my seat by the fire, for I was still chilly. When the design was complete, he handed it to me without rising. As I received it, a loud growl was heard, succeeded by a scratching at the door. Jupiter opened it, and a large Newfoundland, belonging to Legrand, rushed in, leaped upon my shoulders, and loaded me with caresses; for I had shown him much

attention during previous visits. When his gambols were over, I looked at the paper, and, to speak the truth, found myself not a little puzzled at what my friend had depicted.

"Well!" I said, after contemplating it for some minutes, "this *is* a strange *scarabæus,* I must confess; new to me; never saw anything like it before—unless it was a skull, or a death's-head, which it more nearly resembles than anything else that has come under *my* observation."

"A death's-head!" echoed Legrand. "Oh—yes, well, it has something of that appearance upon paper, no doubt. The two upper black spots look like eyes, eh? and the longer one at the bottom like a mouth—and then the shape of the whole is oval."

"Perhaps so," said I, "but, Legrand, I fear you are no artist. I must wait until I see the beetle itself, if I am to form any idea of its personal appearance."

"Well, I don't know," said he, a little nettled, "I draw tolerably—*should* do it at least—have had good masters, and flatter myself that I am not quite a blockhead."

"But, my dear fellow, you are joking, then," said I; "this is a very passable *skull*—indeed, I may say that it is a very *excellent* skull, according to the vulgar notions about such specimens of physiology—and your *scarabæus* must be the queerest *scarabæus* in the world if it resembles it. Why, we may get up a very thrilling bit of superstition upon this hint. I presume you will call the bug *scarabæus caput hominis,* or something of that kind—there are many similar titles in the Natural Histories. But where are the *antennæ* you spoke of?"

"The *antennæ!*" said Legrand, who seemed to be

getting unaccountably warm upon the subject; "I am sure you must see the *antennæ*. I made them as distinct as they are in the original insect, and I presume that is sufficient."

"Well, well," I said, "perhaps you have—still I don't see them"; and I handed him the paper without additional remark, not wishing to ruffle his temper; but I was much surprized at the turn affairs had taken; his ill humor puzzled me—and, as for the drawing of the beetle, there were positively *no antennæ* visible, and the whole did bear a very close resemblance to the ordinary cuts of a death's-head.

He received the paper very peevishly, and was about to crumple it, apparently to throw it in the fire, when a casual glance at the design seemed suddenly to rivet his attention. In an instant his face grew violently red—in another as excessively pale. For some minutes he continued to scrutinize the drawing minutely where he sat. At length he arose, took a candle from the table, and proceeded to seat himself upon a sea-chest in the farthest corner of the room. Here again he made an anxious examination of the paper; turning it in all directions. He said nothing, however, and his conduct greatly astonished me; yet I thought it prudent not to exacerbate the growing moodiness of his temper by any comment. Presently he took from his coat-pocket a wallet, placed the paper carefully in it, and deposited both in a writing-desk, which he locked. He now grew more composed in his demeanor; but his original air of enthusiasm had quite disappeared. Yet he seemed not so much sulky as abstracted. As the evening wore away he became more and more absorbed in revery, from which no sallies of mine could arouse him. It had been my intention to pass

the night at the hut, as I had frequently done before, but, seeing my host in this mood, I deemed it proper to take leave. He did not press me to remain, but, as I departed, he shook my hand with even more than his usual cordiality.

It was about a month after this (and during the interval I had seen nothing of Legrand) when I received a visit, at Charleston, from his man, Jupiter. I had never seen the good old negro look so dispirited, and I feared that some serious disaster had befallen my friend.

"Well, Jup," said I, "what is the matter now?—how is your master?"

"Why, to speak de troof, massa, him not so berry well as mought be."

"Not well! I am truly sorry to hear it. What does he complain of?"

"Dar! dat's it!—him neber 'plain of notin—but him berry sick for all dat."

"*Very* sick, Jupiter!—why didn't you say so at once? Is he confined to bed?"

"No, dat he ain't—he ain't 'fin'd nowhar—dat's just whar de shoe pinch—my mind is got to be berry hebby 'bout poor Massa Will."

"Jupiter, I should like to understand what it is you are talking about. You say your master is sick. Hasn't he told you what ails him?"

"Why, massa, 'taint worf while for to git mad about de matter—Massa Will say noffin at all ain't de matter wid him—but den what make him go about looking dis here way, wid he head down and he soldiers up, and as white as a gose? And den he keep a syphon all de time—"

"Keeps a what, Jupiter?"

"Keeps a syphon wid de figgurs on de slate—de queerest figgurs I ebber did see. Ise gittin' to be skeered, I tell you. Hab for to keep mighty tight eye 'pon him 'noovers. Todder day he gib me slip 'fore de sun up and was gone de whole ob de blessed day. I had a big stick ready cut for to gib him deuced good beating when he did come—but Ise sich a fool dat I hadn't de heart arter all—he looked so berry poorly."

"Eh?—what?—ah yes!—upon the whole I think you had better not be too severe with the poor fellow—don't flog him, Jupiter—he can't very well stand it—but can you form no idea of what has occasioned this illness, or rather this change of conduct? Has anything unpleasant happened since I saw you?"

"No, massa, dey ain't bin noffin onpleasant *since* den—'twas *'fore* den I'm feared—'twas de berry day you was dare."

"How? what do you mean?"

"Why, massa, I mean de bug—dare now."

"The what?"

"De bug—I'm berry sartin dat Massa Will bin bit somewhere 'bout de head by dat goole-bug."

"And what cause have you, Jupiter, for such a supposition?"

"Claws enuff, massa, and mouff, too. I nebber did see sich a deuced bug—he kick and he bite eberyting what cum near him. Massa Will cotch him fuss, but had for to let him go 'gin mighty quick, I tell you—den was de time he must ha' got de bite. I didn't like de look ob de bug mouff, myself, nohow, so I wouldn't take hold ob him wid my finger, but I cotch him wid a piece ob paper dat I found. I rap him up in de paper and stuff a piece of it in he mouff—dat was de way."

"And you think, then, that your master was really bitten by the beetle, and that the bite made him sick?"

"I don't tink noffin about it—I nose it. What make him dream 'bout de goole so much, if 'taint 'cause he bit by the goole-bug? Ise heerd 'bout dem goole-bugs 'fore dis."

"But how do you know he dreams about gold?"

"How I know? why, 'cause he talk about it in he sleep—dat's how I nose."

"Well, Jup, perhaps you are right; but to what fortunate circumstance am I to attribute the honor of a visit from you to-day?"

"What de matter, massa?"

"Did you bring any message from Mr. Legrand?"

"No, massa, I bring dis here pissel"; and here Jupiter handed me a note which ran thus:

"My Dear——: Why have I not seen you for so long a time? I hope you have not been so foolish as to take offense at any little brusquerie of mine; but no, that is improbable.

"Since I saw you I have had great cause for anxiety. I have something to tell you, yet scarcely know how to tell it, or whether I should tell it at all.

"I have not been quite well for some days past, and poor old Jup annoys me, almost beyond endurance, by his well-meant attentions. Would you believe it? —he had prepared a huge stick, the other day, with which to chastize me for giving him the slip, and spending the day, *solus*, among the hills on the main land. I verily believe that my ill looks alone saved me a flogging.

"I have made no addition to my cabinet since we met.

"If you can, in any way, make it convenient, come

over with Jupiter. Do come. I wish to see you to-night, upon business of importance. I assure you that it is of the highest importance.

"Ever yours,
"WILLIAM LEGRAND."

There was something in the tone of this note which gave me great uneasiness. Its whole style differed materially from that of Legrand. What could he be dreaming of? What new crotchet possessed his excitable brain? What "business of the highest importance" could *he* possibly have to transact? Jupiter's account of him boded no good. I dreaded lest the continued pressure of misfortune had, at length, fairly unsettled the reason of my friend. Without a moment's hesitation, therefore, I prepared to accompany the negro.

Upon reaching the wharf, I noticed a scythe and three spades, all apparently new, lying in the bottom of the boat in which we were to embark.

"What is the meaning of all this, Jup?" I inquired.

"Him syfe, massa, and spade."

"Very true; but what are they doing here?"

"Him de syfe and de spade what Massa Will 'sis' 'pon my buying for him in de town, and de debbil's own lot of money I had to gib for 'em."

"But what, in the name of all that is mysterious, is your 'Massa Will' going to do with scythes and spades?"

"Dat's more dan *I* know, and debbil take me if I don't b'lieve 'tis more dan he know, too. But it's all cum ob de bug."

Finding that no satisfaction was to be obtained of Jupiter, whose whole intellect seemed to be absorbed

by "de bug," I now stepped into the boat, and made sail. With a fair and strong breeze we soon ran into the little cove to the northward of Fort Moultrie, and a walk of some two miles brought us to the hut. It was about three in the afternoon when we arrived. Legrand had been awaiting us in eager expectation. He grasped my hand with a nervous *empressement* which alarmed me and strengthened the suspicions already entertained. His countenance was pale even to ghastliness, and his deep-set eyes glared with unnatural luster. After some inquiries respecting his health, I asked him, not knowing what better to say, if he had yet obtained the *scarabaeus* from Lieutenant G——.

"Oh, yes," he replied, coloring violently, "I got it from him the next morning. Nothing should tempt me to part with that *scarabaeus*. Do you know that Jupiter is quite right about it?"

"In what way?" I asked, with a sad foreboding at heart.

"In supposing it to be a bug of *real gold.*" He said this with an air of profound seriousness, and I felt inexpressibly shocked.

"This bug is to make my fortune," he continued, with a triumphant smile; "to reinstate me in my family possessions. Is it any wonder, then, that I prize it? Since Fortune has thought fit to bestow it upon me, I have only to use it properly, and I shall arrive at the gold of which it is the index. Jupiter, bring me that *scarabaeus!*"

"What! de bug, massa? I'd rather not go fer trubble dat bug; you mus' git him for your own self." Hereupon Legrand arose, with a grave and stately air, and brought me the beetle from a glass case in which

it was enclosed. It was a beautiful *scarabæus,* and, at that time, unknown to naturalists—of course a great prize in a scientific point of view. There were two round black spots near one extremity of the back, and a long one near the other. The scales were exceedingly hard and glossy, with all the appearance of burnished gold. The weight of the insect was very remarkable, and, taking all things into consideration, I could hardly blame Jupiter for his opinion respecting it; but what to make of Legrand's concordance with that opinion, I could not, for the life of me, tell.

"I sent for you," said he, in a grandiloquent tone, when I had completed my examination of the beetle, "I sent for you that I might have your counsel and assistance in furthering the views of Fate and of the bug—"

"My dear Legrand," I cried, interrupting him, "you are certainly unwell, and had better use some little precautions. You shall go to bed, and I will remain with you a few days, until you get over this. You are feverish and—"

"Feel my pulse," said he.

I felt it, and to say the truth, found not the slightest indication of fever.

"But you may be ill and yet have no fever. Allow me this once to prescribe for you. In the first place, go to bed. In the next—"

"You are mistaken," he interposed; "I am as well as I can expect to be under the excitement which I suffer. If you really wish me well, you will relieve this excitement."

"And how is this to be done?"

"Very easily. Jupiter and myself are going upon an expedition into the hills, upon the mainland, and, in

this expedition, we shall need the aid of some person in whom we can confide. You are the only one we can trust. Whether we succeed or fail, the excitement which you now perceive in me will be equally allayed."

"I am anxious to oblige you in any way," I replied; "but do you mean to say that this infernal beetle has any connection with your expedition into the hills?"

"It has."

"Then, Legrand, I can become a party to no such absurd proceeding."

"I am sorry—very sorry—for we shall have to try it by ourselves."

"Try it by yourselves! The man is surely mad!—but stay!—how long do you propose to be absent?"

"Probably all night. We shall start immediately, and be back, at all events, by sunrise."

"And will you promise me, upon your honor, that when this freak of yours is over, and the bug business (good God!) settled to your satisfaction, you will then return home and follow my advice implicitly, as that of your physician?"

"Yes; I promise; and now let us be off, for we have no time to lose."

With a heavy heart I accompanied my friend. We started about four o'clock—Legrand, Jupiter, the dog, and myself. Jupiter had with him the scythe and spades—the whole of which he insisted upon carrying—more through fear, it seemed to me, of trusting either of the implements within reach of his master, than from any excess of industry or complaisance. His demeanor was dogged in the extreme, and "dat deuced bug" were the sole words which escaped his lips during the journey. For my own part, I had charge of a couple of dark lanterns, while Legrand contented him-

self with the *scarabaeus,* which he carried attached to the end of a bit of whip-cord; twirling it to and fro, with the air of a conjurer, as he went. When I observed this last, plain evidence of my friend's aberration of mind, I could scarcely refrain from tears. I thought it best, however, to humor his fancy, at least for the present, or until I could adopt some more energetic measures with a chance of success. In the meantime I endeavored, but all in vain, to sound him in regard to the object of the expedition. Having succeeded in inducing me to accompany him, he seemed unwilling to hold conversation upon any topic of minor importance, and to all my questions vouchsafed no other reply than "we shall see!"

We crossed the creek at the head of the island by means of a skiff, and, ascending the high grounds on the shore of the main land, proceeded in a northwesterly direction, through a tract of country excessively wild and desolate, where no trace of a human footstep was to be seen. Legrand led the way with decision; pausing only for an instant, here and there, to consult what appeared to be certain landmarks of his own contrivance upon a former occasion.

In this manner we journeyed for about two hours, and the sun was just setting when we entered a region infinitely more dreary than any yet seen. It was a species of tableland, near the summit of an almost inaccessible hill, densely wooded from base to pinnacle, and interspersed with huge crags that appeared to lie loosely upon the soil, and in many cases were prevented from precipitating themselves into the valleys below, merely by the support of the trees against which they reclined. Deep ravines, in various directions, gave an air of still sterner solemnity to the scene.

The natural platform to which we had clambered was thickly overgrown with brambles, through which we soon discovered that it would have been impossible to force our way but for the scythe; and Jupiter, by direction of his master, proceeded to clear for us a path to the foot of an enormously tall tulip-tree, which stood, with some eight or ten oaks, upon the level, and far surpassed them all, and all other trees which I had then ever seen, in the beauty of its foliage and form, in the wide spread of its branches, and in the general majesty of its appearance. When we reached this tree, Legrand turned to Jupiter, and asked him if he thought he could climb it. The old man seemed a little staggered by the question, and for some moments made no reply. At length he approached the huge trunk, walked slowly around it and examined it with minute attention. When he had completed his scrutiny, he merely said:

"Yes, massa, Jup climb any tree he eber see in he life."

"Then up with you as soon as possible, for it will soon be too dark to see what we are about."

"How far mus' go up, massa?" inquired Jupiter.

"Get up the main trunk first, and then I will tell you which way to go—and here—stop! take this beetle with you."

"De bug, Massa Will!—de goole-bug!" cried the negro, drawing back in dismay—"wath for mus' tote de bug 'way up de tree?—d—n if I do!"

"If you are afraid, Jup, a great big negro like you, to take hold of a harmless little dead beetle, why you can carry it up by this string—but, if you do not take it up with you in some way, I shall be under the necessity of breaking your head with this shovel."

"What de matter now, massa?" said Jup, evidently

shamed into compliance; "always want for to raise fuss wid old nigger. Was only funnin' anyhow. Me feered de bug! what I keer for de bug?" Here he took cautiously hold of the extreme end of the string, and, maintaining the insect as far from his person as circumstances would permit, prepared to ascend the tree.

In youth, the tulip-tree, or *Liriodendron Tulipifera,* the most magnificent of Amercan foresters, has a trunk peculiarly smooth, and often rises to a great height without lateral branches; but, in its riper age, the bark becomes gnarled and uneven, while many short limbs make their appearance on the stem. Thus the difficulty of ascension, in the present case, lay more in semblance than in reality. Embracing the huge cylinder as closely as possible with his arms and knees, seizing with his hands some projections, and resting his naked toes upon others, Jupiter, after one or two narrow escapes from falling, at length wriggled himself into the first great fork, and seemed to consider the whole business as virtually accomplished. The *risk* of the achievement was, in fact, now over, altho the climber was some sixty or seventy feet from the ground.

"Which way mus' go now, Massa Will?" he asked.

"Keep up the largest branch—the one on this side," said Legrand. The negro obeyed him promptly, and apparently with but little trouble; ascending higher and higher, until no glimpse of his squat figure could be obtained through the dense foliage which enveloped it. Presently his voice was heard in a sort of halloo.

"How much fudder is got for go?"

"How high up are you?" asked Legrand.

"Ebber so fur," replied the negro; "can see de sky fru de top ob de tree."

"Never mind the sky, but attend to what I say. Look down the trunk and count the limbs below you on this side. How many limbs have you passed?"

"One, two, tree, four, fibe—I done pass fibe big limb, massa, 'pon dis side."

"Then go one limb higher."

In a few minutes the voice was heard again, announcing that the seventh limb was attained.

"Now, Jup," cried Legrand, evidently much excited, "I want you to work your way out upon that limb as far as you can. If you see anything strange let me know."

By this time what little doubt I might have entertained of my poor friend's insanity was put finally at rest. I had no alternative but to conclude him stricken with lunacy, and I became seriously anxious about getting him home. While I was pondering upon what was best to be done, Jupiter's voice was again heard.

"Mos' feered for to ventur 'pon dis limb berry far—'tis dead limb putty much all de way."

"Did you say it was a *dead* limb, Jupiter?" cried Legrand in a quavering voice.

"Yes, massa, him dead as de door-nail—done up for sartin—done departed dis here life."

"What in the name of heaven shall I do?" asked Legrand, seemingly in the greatest distress.

"Do!" said I, glad of an opportunity to interpose a word, "why, come home and go to bed. Come now!—that's a fine fellow. It's getting late, and, besides, you remember your promise."

"Jupiter," cried he, without heeding me in the least, "do you hear me?"

"Yes, Massa Will, hear you ebber so plain."

"Try the wood well, then, with your knife, and see if you think it *very* rotten."

"Him rotten, massa, sure nuff," replied the negro in a few moments, "but not so berry rotten as mought be. Mought venture out leetle way 'pon de limb by myself, dat's true."

"By yourself!—what do you mean?"

"Why, I mean de bug. 'Tis *berry* hebby bug. S'pose I drop him down fuss, and den de limb won't break wid just de weight ob one nigger."

"You infernal scoundrel!" cried Legrand, apparently much relieved, "what do you mean by telling me such nonsense as that? As sure as you drop that beetle I'll break your neck. Look here, Jupiter, do you hear me?"

"Yes, massa, needn't hollo at poor nigger dat style."

"Well! now listen!—if you will venture out on the limb as far as you think safe, and not let go the beetle, I'll make you a present of a silver dollar as soon as you get down."

"I'm gwine, Massa Will—'deed I is," replied the negro very promptly—"mos' out to the eend now."

"Out to the end!" here fairly screamed Legrand; "do you say you are out to the end of that limb?"

"Soon be to the eend, massa—o-o-o-o-oh! Lor-gol-a-marcy! what *is* dis 'pon de tree?"

"Well!" cried Legrand, highly delighted, "what is it?"

"Why, 'taint noffin but a skull—somebody bin lef' him head up de tree, and de crows done gobble ebery bit ob de meat off."

"A skull, you say!—very well—how is it fastened to the limb?—what holds it on?"

"Sure 'nuff, massa; mus' look. Why dis berry curous sarcumstance, 'pon my word—dare's a great

big nail in de skull, what fastens ob it on to de tree."

"Well now, Jupiter, do exactly as I tell you—do you hear?"

"Yes, massa."

"Pay attention, then—find the left eye of the skull."

"Hum! hoo! dat's good! why dey ain't no eye lef' at all."

"Curse your stupidity! do you know your right hand from your left?"

"Yes, I knows dat—knows all 'bout dat—'tis my lef' hand what I chops de wood wid."

"To be sure! you are left-handed; and your left eye is on the same side as your left hand. Now, I suppose, you can find the left eye of the skull, or the place where the left eye has been. Have you found it?"

Here was a long pause. At length the negro asked:

"Is de lef' eye of de skull 'pon de same side as de lef' hand of de skull, too?—'cause de skull ain't got not a bit ob a hand at all—nebber mind! I got de lef' eye now—here de lef' eye! what mus' do wid it?"

"Let the beetle drop through it, as far as the string will reach—but be careful and not let go your hold of the string."

"All dat done, Massa Will; mighty easy ting for to put de bug fru de hole—look out for him dare below!"

During this colloquy no portion of Jupiter's person could be seen; but the beetle, which he had suffered to descend, was now visible at the end of the string, and glistened, like a globe of burnished gold, in the last rays of the setting sun, some of which still faintly illumined the eminence upon which we stood. The *scarabaeus* hung quite clear of any branches, and, if allowed to fall, would have fallen at our feet. Le-

grand immediately took the scythe, and cleared with it a circular space, three or four yards in diameter, just beneath the insect, and having accomplished this, ordered Jupiter to let go the string and come down from the tree.

Driving a peg, with great nicety, into the ground, at the precise spot where the beetle fell, my friend now produced from his pocket a tape-measure. Fastening one end of this at that point of the trunk of the tree which was nearest the peg, he unrolled it till it reached the peg and thence further unrolled it, in the direction already established by the two points of the tree and the peg, for the distance of fifty feet—Jupiter clearing away the brambles with the scythe. At the spot thus attained a second peg was driven, and about this, as a center, a rude circle, about four feet in diameter, described. Taking now a spade himself, and giving one to Jupiter and one to me, Legrand begged us to set about digging as quickly as possible.

To speak the truth, I had no especial relish for such amusement at any time, and, at that particular moment, would willingly have declined it; for the night was coming on, and I felt much fatigued with the exercise already taken; but I saw no mode of escape, and was fearful of disturbing my poor friend's equanimity by a refusal. Could I have depended, indeed, upon Jupiter's aid, I would have had no hesitation in attempting to get the lunatic home by force; but I was too well assured of the old negro's disposition to hope that he would assist me, under any circumstances, in a personal contest with his master. I made no doubt that the latter had been infected with some of the innumerable Southern superstitions about money

buried, and that his fantasy had received confirmation by the finding of the *scarabaeus,* or, perhaps, by Jupiter's obstinacy in maintaining it to be "a bug of real gold." A mind disposed to lunacy would readily be led away by such suggestions—especially if chiming in with favorite preconceived ideas—and then I called to mind the poor fellow's speech about the beetle's being "the index of his fortune." Upon the whole, I was sadly vexed and puzzled, but, at length, I concluded to make a virtue of necessity—to dig with a good will, and thus the sooner to convince the visionary, by ocular demonstration, of the fallacy of the opinion he entertained.

The lanterns having been lit, we all fell to work with a zeal worthy a more rational cause; and, as the glare fell upon our persons and implements, I could not help thinking how picturesque a group we composed, and how strange and suspicious our labors must have appeared to any interloper who, by chance, might have stumbled upon our whereabouts.

We dug very steadily for two hours. Little was said; and our chief embarrassment lay in the yelpings of the dog, who took exceeding interest in our proceedings. He, at length, became so obstreperous that we grew fearful of his giving the alarm to some stragglers in the vicinity—or, rather, this was the apprehension of Legrand;—for myself, I should have rejoiced at any interruption which might have enabled me to get the wanderer home. The noise was, at length, very effectually silenced by Jupiter, who, getting out of the hole with a dogged air of deliberation, tied the brute's mouth up with one of his suspenders, and then returned, with a grave chuckle, to his task.

When the time mentioned had expired, we had

reached a depth of five feet, and yet no signs of any treasure became manifest. A general pause ensued, and I began to hope that the farce was at an end. Legrand, however, altho evidently much disconcerted, wiped his brow thoughtfully and recommenced. We had excavated the entire circle of four feet diameter, and now we slightly enlarged the limit, and went to the farther depth of two feet. Still nothing appeared. The gold-seeker, whom I sincerely pitied, at length clambered from the pit, with the bitterest disappointment imprinted upon every feature, and proceeded, slowly and reluctantly, to put on his coat, which he had thrown off at the beginning of his labor. In the meantime I made no remark. Jupiter, at a signal from his master, began to gather up his tools. This done, and the dog having been unmuzzled, we turned in profound silence toward home.

We had taken, perhaps, a dozen steps in this direction, when, with a loud oath, Legrand strode up to Jupiter, and seized him by the collar. The astonished negro opened his eyes and mouth to the fullest extent, let fall the spades, and fell upon his knees.

"You scoundrel!" said Legrand, hissing out the syllables from between his clenched teeth—"you infernal black villain!—speak, I tell you!—answer me this instant, without prevarication!—which—which is your left eye?"

"Oh, my golly, Massa Will! ain't dis here my lef' eye for sartain?" roared the terrified Jupiter, placing his hand upon his *right* organ of vision, and holding it there with a desperate pertinacity, as if in immediate dread of his master's attempt at a gouge.

"I thought so!—I knew it! hurrah!" vociferated Legrand, letting the negro go and executing a series of

curvets and caracols, much to the astonishment of his valet, who, arising from his knees, looked, mutely, from his master to myself, and then from myself to his master.

"Come! we must go back," said the latter, "the game's not up yet"; and he again led the way to the tulip-tree.

"Jupiter," said he, when we reached its foot, "come here! was the skull nailed to the limb with the face outward, or with the face to the limb?"

"De face was out, massa, so dat de crows could get at de eyes good, widout any trubble."

"Well, then, was it this eye or that through which you dropped the beetle?" here Legrand touched each of Jupiter's eyes.

" 'Twas dis eye, massa—de lef' eye—jis as you tell me," and here it was his right eye that the negro indicated.

"That will do—we must try it again."

Here my friend, about whose madness I now saw, or fancied that I saw, certain indications of method, removed the peg which marked the spot where the beetle fell, to a spot about three inches to the westward of its former position. Taking, now, the tape measure from the nearest point of the trunk to the peg, as before, and continuing the extension in a straight line to the distance of fifty feet, a spot was indicated, removed, by several yards, from the point at which we had been digging.

Around the new position a circle, somewhat larger than in the former instance, was now described, and we again set to work with the spade. I was dreadfully weary, but, scarcely understanding what had occasioned the change in my thoughts, I felt no longer any great

aversion from the labor imposed. I had become most unaccountably interested—nay, even excited. Perhaps there was something, amid all the extravagant demeanor of Legrand—some air of forethought, or of deliberation, which impressed me. I dug eagerly, and now and then caught myself actually looking, with something that very much resembled expectation, for the fancied treasure, the vision of which had demented my unfortunate companion. At a period when such vagaries of thought most fully possessed me, and when we had been at work perhaps an hour and a half, we were again interrupted by the violent howlings of the dog. His uneasiness, in the first instance, had been, evidently, but the result of playfulness or caprice, but he now assumed a bitter and serious tone. Upon Jupiter's again attempting to muzzle him, he made furious resistance, and, leaping into the hole, tore up the mold frantically with his claws. In a few seconds he had uncovered a mass of human bones, forming two complete skeletons, intermingled with several buttons of metal, and what appeared to be the dust of decayed woolen. One or two strokes of a spade upturned the blade of a large Spanish knife, and, as we dug further, three or four loose pieces of gold and silver coin came to light.

At sight of these the joy of Jupiter could scarcely be restrained, but the countenance of his master wore an air of extreme disappointment. He urged us, however, to continue our exertions, and the words were hardly uttered when I stumbled and fell forward, having caught the toe of my boot in a large ring of iron that lay half buried in the loose earth.

We now worked in earnest, and never did I pass ten minutes of more intense excitement. During this interval we had fairly unearthed an oblong chest of wood,

which, from its perfect preservation and wonderful hardness, had plainly been subjected to some mineralizing process—perhaps that of the bichloride of mercury. This box was three feet and a half long, three feet broad, and two and a half feet deep. It was firmly secured by bands of wrought iron, riveted, and forming a kind of open trelliswork over the whole. On each side of the chest, near the top, were three rings of iron —six in all—by means of which a firm hold could be obtained by six persons. Our utmost united endeavors served only to disturb the coffer very slightly in its bed. We at once saw the impossibility of removing so great a weight. Luckily the sole fastenings of the lid consisted of two sliding bolts. These we drew back—trembling and panting with anxiety. In an instant, a treasure of incalculable value lay gleaming before us. As the rays of the lanterns fell within the pit, there flashed upward a glow and a glare, from a confused heap of gold and of jewels, that absolutely dazzled our eyes.

I shall not pretend to describe the feelings with which I gazed. Amazement was, of course, predominant. Legrand appeared exhausted with excitement, and spoke very few words. Jupiter's countenance wore, for some minutes, as deadly a pallor as it is possible, in the nature of things, for any negro's visage to assume. He seemed stupefied—thunderstricken. Presently he fell upon his knees in the pit, and burying his naked arms up to the elbows in gold, let them there remain, as if enjoying the luxury of a bath. At length, with a deep sigh, he exclaimed, as if in a soliloquy:

"And dis all cum ob de goole-bug! de putty goole-bug! de poor little goole-bug, what I boosed in dat

sabage kind ob style! Ain't you 'shamed ob yourself, nigger?—answer me dat!"

It became necessary, at last, that I should arouse both master and valet to the expediency of removing the treasure. It was growing late, and it behooved us to make exertion, that we might get everything housed before daylight. It was difficult to say what should be done, and much time was spent in deliberation—so confused were the ideas of all. We, finally, lightened the box by removing two-thirds of its contents, when we were enabled, with some trouble, to raise it from the hole. The articles taken out were deposited among the brambles, and the dog left to guard them, with strict orders from Jupiter neither, upon any pretence, to stir from the spot, nor to open his mouth until our return. We then hurriedly made for home with the chest; reaching the hut in safety, but after excessive toil, at one o'clock in the morning. Worn out as we were, it was not in human nature to do more immediately. We rested until two, and had supper; starting for the hills immediately after, armed with three stout sacks, which, by good luck, were upon the premises. A little before four we arrived at the pit, divided the remainder of the booty, as equally as might be, among us, and, leaving the holes unfilled, again set out for the hut, at which, for the second time, we deposited our golden burdens, just as the first faint streaks of the dawn gleamed from over the tree-tops in the East.

We were now thoroughly broken down; but the intense excitement of the time denied us repose. After an unquiet slumber of some three or four hours' duration, we arose, as if by preconcert, to make examination of our treasure.

The chest had been full to the brim, and we spent

the whole day, and the greater part of the next night, in a scrutiny of its contents. There had been nothing like order or arrangement. Everything had been heaped in promiscuously. Having assorted all with care, we found ourselves possessed of even vaster wealth than we had at first supposed. In coin, there was rather more than four hundred and fifty thousand dollars—estimating the value of the pieces, as accurately as we could, by the tables of the period. There was not a particle of silver. All was gold of antique date and of great variety—French, Spanish, and German money, with a few English guineas, and some counters, of which we had never seen specimens before. There were several very large and heavy coins, so worn that we could make nothing of their inscriptions. There was no American money. The value of the jewels we found more difficulty in estimating. There were diamonds—some of them exceedingly large and fine—a hundred and ten in all, and not one of them small; eighteen rubies of remarkable brilliancy;—three hundred and ten emeralds, all very beautiful; and twenty-one sapphires, with an opal. These stones had all been broken from their settings and thrown loose in the chest. The settings themselves, which we picked out from among the other gold, appeared to have been beaten up with hammers, as if to prevent identification. Besides all this, there was a vast quantity of solid gold ornaments; nearly two hundred massive finger and ear rings; rich chains—thirty of these, if I remember; eighty-three very large and heavy crucifixes; five gold censers of great value; a prodigious golden punch-bowl, ornamented with richly chased vine-leaves and Bacchanalian figures; with two sword-handles exquisitely embossed, and many other smaller articles which I can

not recollect. The weight of these valuables exceeded three hundred and fifty pounds avoirdupois; and in this estimate I have not included one hundred and ninety-seven superb gold watches; three of the number being worth each five hundred dollars, if one. Many of them were very old, and as timekeepers valueless; the works having suffered, more or less, from corrosion—but all were richly jewelled and in cases of great worth. We estimated the entire contents of the chest, that night, at a million and a half of dollars; and upon the subsequent disposal of the trinkets and jewels (a few being retained for our own use), it was found that we had greatly undervalued the treasure.

When, at length, we had concluded our examination, and the intense excitement of the time had, in some measure, subsided, Legrand, who saw that I was dying with impatience for a solution of this most extraordinary riddle, entered into a full detail of all the circumstances connected with it.

"You remember," said he, "the night when I handed you the rough sketch I had made of the *scarabaeus*. You recollect, also, that I became quite vexed at you for insisting that my drawing resembled a death's-head. When you first made this assertion I thought you were jesting; but afterward I called to mind the peculiar spots on the back of the insect, and admitted to myself that your remark had some little foundation in fact. Still, the sneer at my graphic powers irritated me—for I am considered a good artist—and, therefore, when you handed me the scrap of parchment, I was about to crumple it up and throw it angrily into the fire."

"The scrap of paper, you mean," said I.

"No; it had much of the appearance of paper, and at first I supposed it to be such, but when I came to draw

upon it, I discovered it at once to be a piece of very thin parchment. It was quite dirty, you remember. Well, as I was in the very act of crumpling it up, my glance fell upon the sketch at which you had been looking, and you may imagine my astonishment when I perceived, in fact, the figure of a death's-head just where, it seemed to me, I had made the drawing of the beetle. For a moment I was too much amazed to think with accuracy. I knew that my design was very different in detail from this—altho there was a certain similarity in general outline. Presently I took a candle, and seating myself at the other end of the room, proceeded to scrutinize the parchment more closely. Upon turning it over, I saw my own sketch upon the reverse, just as I had made it. My first idea, now, was mere surprize at the really remarkably similarity of outline—at the singular coincidence involved in the fact that, unknown to me, there should have been a skull upon the other side of the parchment, immediately beneath my figure of the *scarabaeus,* and that this skull, not only in outline, but in size, should so closely resemble my drawing. I say the singularity of this coincidence absolutely stupefied me for a time. This is the usual effect of such coincidences. The mind struggles to establish a connection—a sequence of cause and effect—and, being unable to do so, suffers a species of temporary paralysis. But, when I recovered from this stupor, there dawned upon me gradually a conviction which startled me even far more than the coincidence. I began distinctly, positively, to remember that there had been *no* drawing upon the parchment when I made my sketch of the *scarabaeus.* I became perfectly certain of this; for I recollected turning up first one side and then the other, in search of the cleanest spot. Had

the skull been there, of course I could not have failed to notice it. Here was indeed a mystery which I felt it impossible to explain; but, even at that early moment, there seemed to glimmer, faintly, within the most remote and secret chambers of my intellect, a glow-worm-like conception of that truth which last night's adventure brought to so magnificent a demonstration. I arose at once, and, putting the parchment securely away, dismissed all further reflection until I should be alone.

"When you had gone, and when Jupiter was fast asleep, I betook myself to a more methodical investigation of the affair. In the first place, I considered the manner in which the parchment had come into my possession. The spot where we discovered the *scarabaeus* was on the coast of the mainland, about a mile eastward of the island, and but a short distance above high-water mark. Upon my taking hold of it, it gave me a sharp bite, which caused me to let it drop. Jupiter, with his accustomed caution, before seizing the insect, which had flown toward him, looked about him for a leaf, or something of that nature, by which to take hold of it. It was at this moment that his eyes, and mine also, fell upon the scrap of parchment, which I then supposed to be paper. It was lying half buried in the sand, a corner sticking up. Near the spot where we found it, I observed the remnants of the hull of what appeared to have been a ship's long-boat. The wreck seemed to have been there for a very great while; for the resemblance to boat timbers could scarcely be traced.

"Well, Jupiter picked up the parchment, wrapped the beetle in it, and gave it to me. Soon afterward we turned to go home, and on the way met Lieutenant

G——. I showed him the insect, and he begged me to let him take it to the fort. Upon my consenting, he thrust it forthwith into his waistcoat pocket, without the parchment in which it had been wrapped, and which I had continued to hold in my hand during his inspection. Perhaps he dreaded my changing my mind, and thought it best to make sure of the prize at once—you know how enthusiastic he is on all subjects connected with natural history. At the same time, without being conscious of it, I must have deposited the parchment in my own pocket.

"You remember that when I went to the table for the purpose of making a sketch of the beetle, I found no paper where it was usually kept. I looked in the drawer, and found none there. I searched my pockets, hoping to find an old letter, when my hand fell upon the parchment. I thus detail the precise mode in which it came into my possession; for the circumstances impressed me with peculiar force.

"No doubt you will think me fanciful—but I had already established a kind of connection. I had put together two links of a great chain. There was a boat lying upon a seacoast, and not far from the boat was a parchment—*not a paper*—with a skull depicted upon it. You will, of course, ask 'where is the connection?' I reply that the skull, or death's-head, is the well-known emblem of the pirate. The flag of the death's-head is hoisted in all engagements.

"I have said that the scrap was parchment, and not paper. Parchment is durable—almost imperishable. Matters of little moment are rarely consigned to parchment; since, for the mere ordinary purposes of drawing or writing, it is not nearly so well adapted as paper. This reflection suggested some meaning—some relevancy

—in the death's-head. I did not fail to observe, also, the *form* of the parchment. Altho one of its corners had been, by some accident, destroyed, it could be seen that the original form was oblong. It was just such a slip, indeed, as might have been chosen for a memorandum—for a record of something to be long remembered and carefully preserved."

"But," I interposed, "you say that the skull was *not* upon the parchment when you made the drawing of the beetle. How then do you trace any connection between the boat and the skull—since this latter, according to your own admission, must have been designed (God only knows how or by whom) at some period subsequent to your sketching the *scarabaeus?*"

"Ah, hereupon turns the whole mystery: altho the secret, at this point, I had comparatively little difficulty in solving. My steps were sure and could afford but a single result. I reasoned, for example, thus: When I drew the *scarabaeus,* there was no skull apparent upon the parchment. When I had completed the drawing I gave it to you, and observed you narrowly until you returned it. *You,* therefore, did not design the skull, and no one else was present to do it. Then it was not done by human agency. And nevertheless it was done.

"At this stage of my reflections I endeavored to remember, and *did* remember, with entire distinctness, every incident which occurred about the period in question. The weather was chilly (oh, rare and happy accident!), and a fire was blazing upon the hearth. I was heated with exercise and sat near the table. You, however, had drawn a chair close to the chimney. Just as I placed the parchment in your hand, and as you were in the act of inspecting it, Wolf, the Newfoundland, entered, and leaped upon your shoulders. With your

left hand you caressed him and kept him off, while your right, holding the parchment, was permitted to fall listlessly between your knees, and in close proximity to the fire. At one moment I thought the blaze had caught it, and was about to caution you, but, before I could speak, you had withdrawn it, and were engaged in its examination. When I considered all these particulars, I doubted not for a moment that *heat* had been the agent in bringing to light, upon the parchment, the skull which I saw designed upon it. You are well aware that chemical preparations exist, and have existed time out of mind, by means of which it is possible to write upon either paper or vellum, so that the characters shall become visible only when subjected to the action of fire. Zaffre, digested in *aqua regia,* and diluted with four times its weight of water, is sometimes employed; a green tint results. The regulus of cobalt, dissolved in spirit of niter, gives a red. These colors disappear at longer or shorter intervals after the material written upon cools, but again become apparent upon the reapplication of heat.

"I now scrutinized the death's-head with care. Its outer edges—the edges of the drawing nearest the edge of the vellum—were far more *distinct* than the others. It was clear that the action of the caloric had been imperfect or unequal. I immediately kindled a fire, and subjected every portion of the parchment to a glowing heat. At first, the only effect was the strengthening of the faint lines in the skull; but, upon persevering in the experiment, there became visible, at the corner of the slip, diagonally opposite to the spot in which the death's-head was delineated, the figure of what I at first supposed to be a goat. A closer scrutiny, however, satisfied me that it was intended for a kid."

"Ha! ha!" said I, "to be sure I have no right to laugh at you—a million and a half of money is too serious a matter for mirth—but you are not about to establish a third link in your chain—you will not find any especial connection between your pirates and a goat—pirates, you know, have nothing to do with goats; they appertain to the farming interest."

"But I have just said that the figure was *not* that of a goat."

"Well, a kid, then—pretty much the same thing."

"Pretty much, but not altogether," said Legrand. "You may have heard of one *Captain* Kidd. I at once looked upon the figure of the animal as a kind of punning or hieroglyphical signature. I say signature, because its position upon the vellum suggested this idea. The death's-head at the corner diagonally opposite, had, in the same manner, the air of a stamp, or seal. But I was sorely put out by the absence of all else—of the body to my imagined instrument—of the text for my context."

"I presume you expected to find a letter between the stamp and the signature."

"Something of that kind. The fact is, I felt irresistibly impressed with a presentiment of some vast good fortune impending. I can scarcely say why. Perhaps, after all, it was rather a desire than an actual belief;—but do you know that Jupiter's silly words, about the bug being of solid gold, had a remarkable effect upon my fancy? And then the series of accidents and coincidences—these were so *very* extraordinary. Do you observe how mere an accident it was that these events should have occurred upon the *sole* day of all the year in which it has been, or may be sufficiently cool for fire, and that without the fire, or without the

intervention of the dog at the precise moment in which he appeared, I should never have become aware of the death's-head, and so never the possessor of the treasure?"

"But proceed—I am all impatience."

"Well; you have heard, of course, the many stories current—the thousand vague rumors afloat about money buried, somewhere upon the Atlantic coast, by Kidd and his associates. These rumors must have had some foundation in fact. And that the rumors have existed so long and so continuously, could have resulted, it appeared to me, only from the circumstance of the buried treasure still *remaining* entombed. Had Kidd concealed his plunder for a time, and afterward reclaimed it, the rumors would scarcely have reached us in their present unvarying form. You will observe that the stories told are all about money-seekers, not about money-finders. Had the pirate recovered his money, there the affair would have dropped. It seemed to me that some accident—say the loss of a memorandum indicating its locality—had deprived him of the means of recovering it, and that this accident had become known to his followers, who otherwise might never have heard that treasure had been concealed at all, and who, busying themselves in vain, because unguided, attempts to regain it, had given first birth, and then universal currency, to the reports which are now so common. Have you ever heard of any important treasure being unearthed along the coast?"

"Never."

"But that Kidd's accumulations were immense, is well known. I took it for granted, therefore, that the earth still held them; and you will scarcely be surprised when I tell you that I felt a hope, nearly amounting to

certainty, that the parchment so strangely found involved a lost record of the place of deposit."

"But how did you proceed?"

"I held the vellum again to the fire, after increasing the heat, but nothing appeared. I now thought it possible that the coating of dirt might have something to do with the failure: so I carefully rinsed the parchment by pouring warm water over it, and, having done this, I placed it in a tin pan, with the skull downward and put the pan upon a furnace of lighted charcoal. In a few minutes, the pan having become thoroughly heated, I removed the slip, and, to my inexpressible joy, found it spotted in several places, with what appeared to be figures arranged in lines. Again I placed it in the pan, and suffered it to remain another minute. Upon taking it off, the whole was just as you see it now."

Here Legrand, having reheated the parchment, submitted it to my inspection. The following characters were rudely traced in a red tint, between the death's-head and the goat:

" 53‡‡†305))6*;4826)4‡);806*;48†8¶60))85;1‡(;:‡*8
†83(88)5*†;46(;88*96*?;8)*‡(;485);5*†2:*‡(;4956*2
(5*—4)8¶8*;4069285);)6†8)4‡‡;1(‡9;48081;8:8‡1;48
†85;4) 485†528806*81 (‡9;48;(88;4(‡?34;48)4‡;161;:
188;‡?;"

"But," said I, returning him the slip, "I am as much in the dark as ever. Were all the jewels of Golconda awaiting me upon my solution of this enigma, I am quite sure that I should be unable to earn them."

"And yet," said Legrand, "the solution is by no means so difficult as you might be led to imagine from the first hasty inspection of the characters. These

characters, as any one might readily guess, form a cipher—that is to say, they convey a meaning; but then from what is known of Kidd, I could not suppose him capable of constructing any of the more abstruse cryptographs. I made up my mind, at once, that this was of a simple species—such, however, as would appear, to the crude intellect of the sailor, absolutely insoluble without the key."

"And you really solved it?"

"Readily; I have solved others of an abstruseness ten thousand times greater. Circumstances, and a certain bias of mind, have led me to take interest in such riddles, and it may well be doubted whether human ingenuity can construct an enigma of the kind which human ingenuity may not, by proper application, resolve. In fact, having once established connected and legible characters, I scarcely gave a thought to the mere difficulty of developing their import.

"In the present case—indeed, in all cases of secret writing—the first question regards the *language* of the cipher; for the principles of solution, so far, especially, as the more simple ciphers are concerned, depend upon, and are varied by, the genius of the particular idiom. In general, there is no alternative but experiment (directed by probabilities) of every tongue known to him who attempts the solution, until the true one be attained. But, with the cipher now before us all difficulty was removed by the signature. The pun upon the word 'Kidd' is appreciable in no other language than the English. But for this consideration I should have begun my attempts with Spanish and French, as the tongues in which a secret of this kind would most naturally have been written by a pirate of the Spanish main. As it was, I assumed the cryptograph to be English.

"You observe there are no divisions between the words. Had there been divisions the task would have been comparatively easy. In such case I should have commenced with a collation and analysis of the shorter words, and, had a word of a single letter occurred, as is most likely (*a* or *I*, for example), I should have considered the solution as assured. But, there being no division, my first step was to ascertain the predominant letters, as well as the least frequent. Counting all, I constructed a table thus:

Of the characters	8	there are 33.
	;	" 26.
	4	" 19.
	‡)	" 16.
	*	" 13.
	5	" 12.
	6	" 11.
	†1	" 8.
	0	" 6.
	9 2	" 5.
	:3	" 4.
	?	" 3.
	¶	" 2.
	—.	" 1.

"Now, in English, the letter which most frequently occurs is *e*. Afterward, the succession runs thus: *a o i d h n r s t u y c f g l m w b k p q x z*. *E* predominates so remarkably that an individual sentence of any length is rarely seen in which it is not the prevailing character.

"Here, then, we have, in the very beginning, the groundwork for something more than a mere guess. The general use which may be made of the table is

obvious—but, in this particular cipher, we shall only very partially require its aid. As our predominant character is 8, we will commence by assuming it as the *e* of the natural alphabet. To verify the supposition, let us observe if the 8 be seen often in couples—for *e* is doubled with great frequency in English—in such words, for example, as 'meet,' 'fleet,' 'speed,' 'seen,' 'been,' 'agree,' etc. In the present instance we see it doubled no less than five times, altho the cryptograph is brief.

"Let us assume 8, then, as *e*. Now, of all *words* in the language, 'the' is most usual; let us see, therefore, whether there are not repetitions of any three characters, in the same order of collocation, the last of them being 8. If we discover repetitions of such letters, so arranged, they will most probably represent the word 'the.' Upon inspection, we find no less than seven such arrangements, the characters being ;48. We may, therefore, assume that ; represents *t*, 4 represents *h*, and 8 represents *e*—the last being now well confirmed. Thus a great step has been taken.

"But, having established a single word, we are enabled to establish a vastly important point; that is to say, several commencements and terminations of other words. Let us refer, for example, to the last instance but one, in which the combination ;48 occurs—not far from the end of the cipher. We know that the ; immediately ensuing is the commencement of a word, and, of the six characters succeeding this 'the,' we are cognizant of no less than five. Let us set these characters down, thus, by the letters we know them to represent, leaving a space for the unknown—

t eeth.

"Here we are enabled, at once, to discard the *'th,'* as forming no portion of the word commencing with the first *t;* since, by experiment of the entire alphabet for a letter adapted to the vacancy, we perceive that no word can be formed of which this *th* can be a part. We are thus narrowed into

t ee,

and, going through the alphabet, if necessary, as before, we arrive at the word 'tree,' as the sole possible reading. We thus gain another letter, *r,* represented by (, with the words 'the tree' in juxtaposition.

"Looking beyond these words, for a short distance, we again see the combination ;48, and employ it by way of termination to what immediately precedes. We have thus this arrangement:

the tree ;4(‡?34 the,

or, substituting the natural letters, where known, it reads thus:

the tree thr‡?3h the.

"Now, if, in the place of the unknown characters, we leave blank spaces, or substitute dots, we read thus:

the tree thr...h the,

when the word 'through' makes itself evident at once. But this discovery gives us three new letters, *o, u,* and *g,* represented by ‡, ?, and 3.

"Looking now, narrowly, through the cipher for com-

binations of known characters, we find, not very far from the beginning, this arrangement,

83(88, or egree,

which plainly, is the conclusion of the word 'degree,' and gives us another letter, *d,* represented by †.

"Four letters beyond the word 'degree,' we perceive the combination

;46(;88*

"Translating the known characters, and representing the unknown by dots, as before, we read thus:

th.rtee,

an arrangement immediately suggestive of the word 'thirteen,' and again furnishing us with two new characters, *i* and *n,* represented by 6 and *.

"Referring, now, to the beginning of the cryptograph, we find the combination,

53‡‡†.

"Translating as before, we obtain

.good,

which assures us that the first letter is *A,* and that the first two words are 'A good.'

"It is now time that we arrange our key, as far as discovered, in a tabular form, to avoid confusion. It will stand thus:

5	represents	a
†	"	d
8	"	e
3	"	g
4	"	h
6	"	i
*	"	n
‡	"	o
(	"	r
;	"	t
?	"	u

"We have, therefore, no less than eleven of the most important letters represented, and it will be unnecessary to proceed with the details of the solution. I have said enough to convince you that ciphers of this nature are readily soluble, and to give you some insight into the *rationale* of their development. But be assured that the specimen before us appertains to the very simplest species of cryptograph. It now only remains to give you the full translation of the characters upon the parchment, as unriddled. Here it is:

"'A good glass in the bishop's hostel in the devil's seat forty-one degrees and thirteen minutes northeast and by north main branch seventh limb east side shoot from the left eye of the death's-head a bee-line from the tree through the shot fifty feet out.'"

"But," said I, "the enigma seems still in as bad a condition as ever. How is it possible to extort a meaning from all this jargon about 'devil's seats,' 'death's-head,' and 'bishop's hotels?'"

"I confess," replied Legrand, "that the matter still

wears a serious aspect, when regarded with a casual glance. My first endeavor was to divide the sentence into the natural division intended by the cryptographist."

"You mean, to punctuate it?"

"Something of that kind."

"But how was it possible to effect this?"

"I reflect that it had been a point with the writer to run his words together without division, so as to increase the difficulty of solution. Now, a not over-acute man, in pursuing such an object, would be nearly certain to overdo the matter. When, in the course of his composition, he arrived at a break in his subject which would naturally require a pause, or a point, he would be exceedingly apt to run his characters, at this place, more than usually close together. If you will observe the MS., in the present instance, you will easily detect five such cases of unusual crowding. Acting upon this hint, I made the division thus:

"'A good glass in the bishop's hostel in the devil's seat—forty-one degrees and thirteen minutes—northeast and by north—main branch seventh limb east side—shoot from the left eye of the death's-head—a bee-line from the tree through the shot fifty feet out.'"

"Even this division," said I, "leaves me still in the dark."

"It left me also in the dark," replied Legrand, "for a few days; during which I made diligent inquiry in the neighborhood of Sullivan's Island, for any building which went by name of the 'Bishop's Hotel'; for, of course, I dropped the obsolete word 'hostel.' Gaining no information on the subject I was on the point of

extending my sphere of search, and proceeding in a more systematic manner, when, one morning, it entered into my head, quite suddenly, that this 'Bishop's Hostel' might have some reference to an old family, of the name of Bessop, which, time out of mind, had held possession of an ancient manor-house, about four miles to the northward of the island. I accordingly went over to the plantation, and reinstituted my inquiries among the older negroes of the place. At length one of the most aged of the women said that she had heard of such a place as Bessop's Castle, and thought that she could guide me to it, but that it was not a castle, nor a tavern, but a high rock.

"I offered to pay her well for her trouble, and, after some demur, she consented to accompany me to the spot. We found it without much difficulty, when, dismissing her, I proceeded to examine the place. The 'castle' consisted of an irregular assemblage of cliffs and rocks—one of the latter being quite remarkable for its height as well as for its insulated and artificial appearance. I clambered to its apex, and then felt much at a loss as to what should be next done.

"While I was busied in reflection, my eyes fell upon a narrow ledge in the eastern face of the rock, perhaps a yard below the summit upon which I stood. This ledge projected about eighteen inches, and was not more than a foot wide, while a niche in the cliff just above it gave it a rude resemblance to one of the hollow-backed chairs used by our ancestors. I made no doubt that here was the 'devil's-seat' alluded to in the MS., and now I seemed to grasp the full secret of the riddle.

"The 'good glass,' I knew, could have reference to nothing but a telescope; for the word 'glass' is rarely

employed in any other sense by seamen. Now here, I at once saw, was a telescope to be used, and a definite point of view, admitting *no variation,* from which to use it. Nor did I hesitate to believe that the phrases, 'forty-one degrees and thirteen minutes,' and 'northeast and by north,' were intended as directions for the leveling of the glass. Greatly excited by these discoveries, I hurried home, procured a telescope, and returned to the rock.

"I let myself down to the ledge, and found that it was impossible to retain a seat upon it except in one particular position. This fact confirmed my preconceived idea. I proceeded to use the glass. Of course, the 'forty-one degrees and thirteen minutes' could allude to nothing but elevation above the visible horizon, since the horizontal direction was clearly indicated by the words, 'northeast and by north.' This latter direction I at once established by means of a pocket-compass; then, pointing the glass as nearly at an angle of forty-one degrees of elevation as I could do it by guess, I moved it cautiously up or down, until my attention was arrested by a circular rift or opening in the foliage of a large tree that overtopped its fellows in the distance. In the centre of this rift I perceived a white spot, but could not, at first, distinguish what it was. Adjusting the focus of the telescope, I again looked, and now made it out to be a human skull.

"Upon this discovery I was so sanguine as to consider the enigma solved; for the phrase 'main branch, seventh limb, east side,' could refer only to the position of the skull upon the tree, while 'shoot from the left eye of the death's-head' admitted, also, of but one interpretation, in regard to a search for buried treasure. I

perceived that the design was to drop a bullet from the left eye of the skull, and that a bee-line, or, in other words, a straight line, drawn from the nearest point of the trunk through the shot (or the spot where the bullet fell), and thence extended to a distance of fifty feet, would indicate a definite point—and beneath this point I thought it at least *possible* that a deposit of value lay concealed."

"All this," I said, "is exceedingly clear, and, altho ingenious, still simple and explicit. When you left the Bishop's Hotel, what then?"

"Why, having carefully taken the bearings of the tree, I turned homeward. The instant that I left 'the devil's-seat,' however, the circular rift vanished; nor could I get a glimpse of it afterward, turn as I would. What seems to me the chief ingenuity in this whole business, is the fact (for repeated experiment has convinced me it *is* a fact) that the circular opening in question is visible from no other attainable point of view than that afforded by the narrow ledge upon the face of the rock.

"In this expedition to the 'Bishop's Hotel' I had been attended by Jupiter, who had, no doubt, observed, for some weeks past, the abstraction of my demeanor, and took especial care not to leave me alone. But, on the next day, getting up very early, I contrived to give him the slip, and went into the hills in search of the tree. After much toil I found it. When I came home at night my valet proposed to give me a flogging. With the rest of the adventure I believe you are as well acquainted as myself."

"I suppose," said I, "you missed the spot, in the first attempt at digging, through Jupiter's stupidity in

letting the bug fall through the right instead of through the left eye of the skull."

"Precisely. This mistake made a difference of about two inches and a half in the 'shot'—that is to say, in the position of the peg nearest the tree; and had the treasure been *beneath* the 'shot,' the error would have been of little moment; but 'the shot,' together with the nearest point of the tree, were merely two points for the establishment of a line of direction; of course, the error, however trivial in the beginning, increased as we proceeded with the line, and by the time we had gone fifty feet threw us quite off the scent. But for my deep-seated impressions that treasure was here somewhere actually buried, we might have had all our labor in vain."

"But your grandiloquence, and your conduct in swinging the beetle—how excessively odd! I was sure you were mad. And why did you insist upon letting fall the bug, instead of a bullet, from the skull?"

"Why, to be frank, I felt somewhat annoyed by your evident suspicions touching my sanity, and so resolved to punish you quietly, in my own way, by a little bit of sober mystification. For this reason I swung the beetle, and for this reason I let it fall from the tree. An observation of yours about its great weight suggested the latter idea."

"Yes, I perceive; and now there is only one point which puzzles me. What are we to make of the skeletons found in the hole?"

"That is a question I am no more able to answer than yourself. There seems, however, only one plausible way of accounting for them—and yet it is dreadful to believe in such atrocity as my suggestion would imply. It is clear that Kidd (if Kidd indeed secreted this

treasure, which I doubt not)—it is clear that he must have had assistance in the labor. But, this labor concluded, he may have thought it expedient to remove all participants in his secret. Perhaps a couple of blows with a mattock were sufficient, while his coadjutors were busy in the pit; perhaps it required a dozen—who shall tell?"

THE GUILTY SECRET

By Paul De Kock

Nathalie de Hauteville was twenty-two years old, and had been a widow for three years. She was one of the prettiest women in Paris; her large dark eyes shone with remarkable brilliancy, and she united the sparkling vivacity of an Italian and the depth of feeling of a Spaniard to the grace which always distinguishes a Parisian born and bred. Considering herself too young to be entirely alone, she had long ago invited M. d'Ablaincourt, an old uncle of hers, to come and live with her.

M. d'Ablaincourt was an old bachelor; he had never loved anything in this world but himself. He was an egotist, too lazy to do any one an ill turn, but at the same time too selfish to do any one a kindness, unless it would tend directly to his own advantage. And yet, with an air of complaisance, as if he desired nothing so much as the comfort of those around him, he consented to his niece's proposal, in the hope that she would do many kind little offices for him, which would add materially to his comfort.

M. d'Ablaincourt accompanied his niece when she resumed her place in society; but sometimes, when he felt inclined to stay at home, he would say to her: "My dear Nathalie, I am afraid you will not be much amused this evening. They will only play cards; be-

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sides, I don't think any of your friends will be there. Of course, I am ready to take you, if you wish to go."

And Nathalie, who had great confidence in all her uncle said, would stay at home.

In the same manner, M. d'Ablaincourt, who was a great gourmand, said to his niece: "My dear, you know that I am not at all fond of eating, and am satisfied with the simplest fare; but I must tell you that your cook puts too much salt in everything! It is very unwholesome."

So they changed the cook.

Again, the garden was out of order; the trees before the old gentleman's window must be cut down, because their shade would doubtless cause a dampness in the house prejudicial to Nathalie's health; or the surrey was to be changed for a landau.

Nathalie was a coquet. Accustomed to charm, she listened with smiles to the numerous protestations of admiration which she received. She sent all who aspired to her hand to her uncle, saying: "Before I give you any hope, I must know my uncle's opinion."

It is likely that Nathalie would have answered differently if she had ever felt a real preference for any one; but heretofore she seemed to have preferred her liberty.

The old uncle, for his part, being now master in his niece's house, was very anxious for her to remain as she was. A nephew might be somewhat less submissive than Nathalie. Therefore, he never failed to discover some great fault in each of those who sought an alliance with the pretty widow.

Besides his egotism and his epicureanism, the dear uncle had another passion—to play backgammon. The game amused him very much; but the difficulty was

to find any one to play with. If, by accident, any of Nathalie's visitors understood it, there was no escape from a long siege with the old gentleman; but most people preferred cards.

In order to please her uncle, Nathalie tried to learn this game; but it was almost impossible. She could not give her attention to one thing for so long a time. Her uncle scolded. Nathalie gave up in despair.

"It was only for your own amusement that I wished to teach it to you," said the good M. d'Ablaincourt.

Things were at this crisis when, at a ball one evening, Nathalie was introduced to a M. d'Apremont, a captain in the navy.

sailor, with a wooden leg and a bandage over one eye;

Nathalie raised her eyes, expecting to see a great when to her great surprise, she beheld a man of about thirty, tall and finely formed, with two sound legs and two good eyes.

Armand d'Apremont had entered the navy at a very early age, and had arrived, altho very young, to the dignity of a captain. He had amassed a large fortune, in addition to his patrimonial estate, and he had now come home to rest after his labors. As yet, however, he was a single man, and, moreover, had always laughed at love.

But when he saw Nathalie, his opinions underwent a change. For the first time in his life he regretted that he had never learned to dance, and he kept his eyes fixed on her constantly.

His attentions to the young widow soon became a subject of general conversation, and, at last, the report reached the ears of M. d'Ablaincourt. When Nathalie mentioned, one evening, that she expected the captain

to spend the evening with her, the old man grew almost angry.

"Nathalie," said he, "you act entirely without consulting me. I have heard that the captain is very rude and unpolished in his manners. To be sure, I have only seen him standing behind your chair; but he has never even asked after my health. I only speak for your interest, as you are so giddy."

Nathalie begged her uncle's pardon, and even offered not to receive the captain's visit; but this he forbore to require—secretly resolving not to allow these visits to become too frequent.

But how frail are all human resolutions—overturned by the merest trifle! In this case, the game of backgammon was the unconscious cause of Nathalie's becoming M'me d'Apremont. The captain was an excellent hand at backgammon. When the uncle heard this, he proposed a game; and the captain, who understood that it was important to gain the uncle's favor, readily acceded.

This did not please Nathalie. She preferred that he should be occupied with herself. When all the company were gone, she turned to her uncle, saying: "You were right, uncle, after all. I do not admire the captain's manners; I see now that I should not have invited him."

"On the contrary, niece, he is a very well-behaved man. I have invited him to come here very often, and play backgammon with me—that is, to pay his addresses to you."

Nathalie saw that the captain had gained her uncle's heart, and she forgave him for having been less attentive to her. He soon came again, and, thanks to the backgammon, increased in favor with the uncle.

He soon captivated the heart of the pretty widow, also. One morning, Nathalie came blushing to her uncle.

"The captain has asked me to marry him. What do you advise me to do?"

He reflected for a few moments. "If she refuses him, D'Apremont will come here no longer, and then no more backgammon. But if she marries him, he will be here always, and I shall have my games." And the answer was: "You had better marry him."

Nathalie loved Armand; but she would not yield too easily. She sent for the captain.

"If you really love me—"

"Ah, can you doubt it?"

"Hush! do not interrupt me. If you really love me, you will give me one proof of it."

"Anything you ask. I swear—"

"No, you must never swear any more; and, one thing more, you must never smoke. I detest the smell of tobacco, and I will not have a husband who smokes."

Armand sighed, and promised.

The first month of their marriage passed smoothly, but sometimes Armand became thoughtful, restless, and grave. After some time, these fits of sadness became more frequent.

"What is the matter?" asked Nathalie one day, on seeing him stamp with impatience. "Why are you so irritable?"

"Nothing—nothing at all!" replied the captain, as if ashamed of his ill humor.

"Tell me," Nathalie insisted, "have I displeased you in anything?"

The captain assured her that he had no reason to be anything but delighted with her conduct on all oc-

casions, and for a time he was all right. Then soon he was worse than before.

Nathalie was distressed beyond measure. She imparted her anxiety to her uncle, who replied: "Yes, my dear, I know what you mean; I have often remarked it myself, at backgammon. He is very inattentive, and often passes his hand over his forehead, and starts up as if something agitated him."

And one day, when his old habits of impatience and irritability reappeared, more marked than ever, the captain said to his wife: "My dear, an evening walk will do me a world of good; an old sailor like myself cannot bear to sit around the house after dinner. Nevertheless, if you have any objection—"

"Oh, no! What objection can I have?"

He went out, and continued to do so, day after day, at the same hour. Invariably he returned in the best of good humor.

Nathalie was now unhappy indeed. "He loves some other woman, perhaps," she thought, "and he must see her every day. Oh, how wretched I am! But I must let him know that his perfidy is discovered. No, I will wait until I shall have some certain proof wherewith to confront him."

And she went to seek her uncle. "Ah, I am the most unhappy creature in the world!" she sobbed.

"What is the matter?" cried the old man, leaning back in his armchair.

"Armand leaves the house for two hours every evening, after dinner, and comes back in high spirits and as anxious to please me as on the day of our marriage. Oh, uncle, I cannot bear it any longer! If you do not assist me to discover where he goes, I will seek a separation."

"But, my dear niece—"

"My dear uncle, you who are so good and obliging, grant me this one favor. I am sure there is some woman in the secret."

M. d'Ablaincourt wished to prevent a rupture between his niece and nephew, which would interfere very much with the quiet, peaceable life which he led at their house. He pretended to follow Armand; but came back very soon, saying he had lost sight of him.

"But in what direction does he go?"

"Sometimes one way, and sometimes another, but always alone; so your suspicions are unfounded. Be assured, he only walks for exercise."

But Nathalie was not to be duped in this way. She sent for a little errand boy, of whose intelligence she had heard a great deal.

"M. d'Apremont goes out every evening."

"Yes, madame."

"To-morrow, you will follow him; observe where he goes, and come and tell me privately. Do you understand?"

"Yes, madame."

Nathalie waited impatiently for the next day, and for the hour of her husband's departure. At last, the time came—the pursuit is going on—Nathalie counted the moments. After three-quarters of an hour, the messenger arrived, covered with dust.

"Well," exclaimed Nathalie, "speak! Tell me everything that you have seen!"

"Madame, I followed M. d'Apremont, at a distance, as far as the Rue Vieille du Temple, where he entered a small house, in an alley. There was no servant to let him in."

"An alley! No servant! Dreadful!"

"I went in directly after him, and heard him go up-stairs and unlock a door."

"Open the door himself, without knocking! Are you sure of that?"

"Yes, madame."

"The wretch! So he has a key! But, go on."

"When the door shut after him, I stole softly up-stairs, and peeped through the keyhole."

"You shall have twenty francs more."

"I peeped through the keyhole, and saw him drag a trunk along the floor."

"A trunk?"

"Then he undressed himself, and—"

"Undressed himself!"

"Then, for a few seconds, I could not see him, and directly he appeared again, in a sort of gray blouse, and a cap on his head."

"A blouse! What in the world does he want with a blouse? What next?"

"I came away, then, madame, and made haste to tell you; but he is there still."

"Well, now run to the corner and get me a cab, and direct the coachman to the house where you have been."

While the messenger went for the cab, Nathalie hurried on her hat and cloak, and ran into her uncle's room.

"I have found him out—he loves another. He's at her house now, in a gray blouse. But I will go and confront him, and then you will see me no more."

The old man had no time to reply. She was gone, with her messenger, in the cab. They stopped at last.

"Here is the house."

Nathalie got out, pale and trembling.

"Shall I go up-stairs with you, madame?" asked the boy.

"No, I will go alone. The third story, isn't it?"

"Yes, madame; the left-hand door, at the head of the stairs."

It seemed that now, indeed, the end of all things was at hand.

Nathalie mounted the dark, narrow stairs, and arrived at the door, and, almost fainting, she cried: "Open the door, or I shall die!"

The door was opened, and Nathalie fell into her husband's arms. He was alone in the room, clad in a gray blouse, and—smoking a Turkish pipe.

"My wife!" exclaimed Armand, in surprise.

"Your wife—who, suspecting your perfidy, has followed you, to discover the cause of your mysterious conduct!"

"How, Nathalie, my mysterious conduct? Look, here it is!" (Showing his pipe.) "Before our marriage, you forbade me to smoke, and I promised to obey you. For some months I kept my promise; but you know what it cost me; you remember how irritable and sad I became. It was my pipe, my beloved pipe, that I regretted. One day, in the country, I discovered a little cottage, where a peasant was smoking. I asked him if he could lend me a blouse and cap; for I should like to smoke with him, but it was necessary to conceal it from you, as the smell of smoke, remaining in my clothes, would have betrayed me. It was soon settled between us. I returned thither every afternoon, to indulge in my favorite occupation; and, with the precaution of a cap to keep the smoke from remaining in my hair, I contrived to deceive you. This is all the mystery. Forgive me."

Nathalie kissed him, crying: "I might have known it could not be! I am happy now, and you shall smoke as much as you please, at home."

And Nathalie returned to her uncle, saying: "Uncle, he loves me! He was only smoking, but hereafter he is to smoke at home."

"I can arrange it all," said D'Ablaincourt; "he shall smoke while he plays backgammon."

"In that way," thought the old man, "I shall be sure of my game."

OUT OF EXILE

By Wilbur Daniel Steele

Among all the memories of my boyhood in Urkey Island the story of Mary Matheson and the Blake boys comes back to me now, more than any other, with the sense of a thing seen in a glass darkly. And the darkness of the glass was my own adolescence.

I know that now, and I'm sorry. I'm ashamed to find myself suspecting that half of Mary Matheson's mature beauty in my eyes may have been romance. and half the romance mystery, and half of that the unsettling discovery that the other sex does not fade at seventeen and wither quite away at twenty, as had been taken somehow for granted. I'm glad there is no possibility of meeting her again as she was at thirty, and so making sure: I shall wish to remember her as the boy of sixteen saw her that night waiting in the dunes above the wreck of the "India ship," with Roll-down Nickerson bleating as he fled from the small, queer casket of polished wood he had flung on the sand, and the bridegroom peering out of the church window, over the moors in Urkey Village.

The thing began when I was too young to make much of it yet, a wonder of less than seven days among all the other bright, fragmentary wonders of a boy's life at six. Mainly I remember that Mary

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Matheson was a fool; every one in Urkey Village was saying that.

I can't tell how long the Blake boys had been courting her. I came too late to see anything but the climax of that unbrotherly tournament, and only by grace of the hundredth chance of luck did I witness even one act of that.

I was coming home one autumn evening just at dusk, loitering up the cow street from the eastward where the big boys had been playing, "Run, Sheep, Run," and I watching from the vantage of Aunt Dee Nickerson's hen-house and getting whacked when I told. And I had come almost to the turning into Drugstore Lane when the sound of a voice fetched me up, all eyes and ears, against the pickets of the Matheson place.

It was the voice of my cousin Duncan, the only father I ever knew. He was constable of Urkey Village, and there was something in the voice as I heard it in the yard that told you why.

"Drop it, Joshua! Drop it, or by heavens—!"

Of Duncan I could see only the back, large and near. But the faces of the others were plain to my peep-hole between the pickets, or as plain as might be in the falling dusk. The sky overhead was still bright, but the blue shadow of the bluff lay all across that part of the town, and it deepened to a still bluer and cooler mystery under the apple-tree canopy sheltering the dooryard. I never see that light to this day, a high gloaming sifted through leaves on turf, without the faintest memory of a shiver. For that was the first I had ever known of anger, the still and deadly anger of grown men.

My cousin had spoken to Joshua Blake, and I saw

that Joshua held a pistol in his hand, the old, single-ball dueling weapon that had belonged to his father. His face was white, and the pallor seemed to refine still further the blade-like features of the Blake, the aquiline nose, the sloping, patrician forehead, the narrow lip, blue to the pressure of the teeth.

That was Joshua. Andrew, his brother, stood facing him three or four paces away. He was the younger of the two, the less favored, the more sensitive.

He had what no other Blake had had, a suspicion of freckle on his high, flat cheek. And he had what no one else in Urkey had then, a brace of gold teeth, the second and third to the left in the upper jaw, where Lem White's boom had caught him, jibing off the Head. They showed now as the slowly working lip revealed them, glimmering with a moist, dull sheen. He, too, was white.

His hands were empty, hanging down palms forward. But in his eyes there was no look of the defenseless: only a light of passionate contempt.

And between the two, and beyond them, as I looked, stood Mary, framed by the white pillars of the doorway, her hands at her throat and her long eyes dilated with a girl's fright more precious than exultation. So the three remained in tableau while, as if on another planet, the dusk deepened from moment to moment: Gramma Pilot, two yards away, brought supper to her squealing sow; and further off, out on the waning mirror of the harbor, a conch lowed faintly for some schooner's bait.

"Drop it, Joshua!" Duncan's voice came loud and clear.

And this time, following the hush, it seemed to exercise the devil of quietude. I heard Mary's breath

between her lips, and saw Andrew wheel sharply to pick a scale from the tree-trunk with a thumb-nail. Joshua's eyes went down to the preposterous metal in his hand; he shivered slightly like a dreamer awakening and thrust it in his pocket. And then, seeing Duncan turning toward the fence and me, I took the better part of valor and ran, and saw no more.

There were serious men in town that night when it was known what a pass the thing had come to; men that walked and women that talked. It was all Mary's fault. Long ago she ought to have taken one of them and "sent the other packing." That's what Miah White said, sitting behind the stove in our kitchen over the shop; that's what Duncan thought as he paced back and forth, shaking his head. That's what they were all saying or thinking as they sat or wandered about.

Such are the difficulties of serious men. And even while it all went on, Mary Matheson had gone about her choosing in the way that seemed fit to youth. In the warm-lit publicity of Miss Alma Beedie's birthday-party, shaking off so soon the memory of that brief glint of pistol-play under the apple-trees, she took a fantastic vow to marry the one that brought her the wedding-ring—promised with her left hand on Miss Beedie's album and her right lifted toward the allegorical print of the Good Shepherd that the one who, first across the Sound to the jeweler's at Gillyport and back again, fetched her the golden-ring—that he should be her husband "for better or for worse, till death us do part, and so forth and so on, Amen!"

And those who were there remembered afterwards that while Joshua stood his ground and laughed and clapped with the best of them, his brother Andrew

left the house. They said his face was a sick white, and that he looked back at Mary for an instant from the doorway with a curious, hurt expression in his eyes, as if to say, "Is it only a game to you then? And if it's only a game, is it worth the candle?" They remembered it afterward, I say; long afterward.

They thought he had gone out for just a moment; that presently he would return to hold up his end of the gay challenge over the cakes and cordial. But to that party Andrew Blake never returned. Their first hint of what was afoot they had when Rolldown Nickerson, the beachcomber, came running in, shining with the wet of the autumn gale that began that night. He wanted Joshua to look out for his brother. Being innocent of what had happened at the party, he thought Andrew had gone out of his head.

"Here I come onto him in the lee of White's wharf putting a compass into the old man's sail-dory, and I says to him, 'What you up to, Andrew?' And he says with a kind of laugh, 'Oh, taking a little sail for other parts,' says he—like that. Now, just imagine, Josh, with this here weather coming on—all hell bu'sting loose to the north'rd!"

They say that there came a look into Joshua's eyes that none of them had ever seen before. He stood there for a moment, motionless and silent, and Rolldown, deceived by his attitude, was at him again.

"You don't realize, man, or else you'd stop him!"

"Oh, I'll *stop* him!" It was hardly above a breath. "I'll *stop* him!" And throwing his greatcoat over his shoulders, Joshua went out.

You may believe that the house would not hold the party after that. Whispering, giggling, shivering, the young people trooped down Heman Street to the shore.

And there, under the fantom light of a moon hidden by the drift of storm-clouds, they found Andrew gone, and all they saw of Joshua was a shadow—a shadow in black frock-clothes—wading away from them over the half-covered flats, deeper and deeper, to where the Adams sloop rode at her moorings, a shade tailing in the wind. They called, but he did not answer, and before they could do anything he had the sail up, and he, too, was gone, into the black heart of the night.

It is lonesome in the dark for a boy of six when the floor heaves and the bed shivers and over his head the shingles make a sound in the wind like the souls of all the lost men in the world. The hours from two till dawn that night I spent under the table in the kitchen, where Miah White and his brother Lem had come to talk with Duncan. And among the three of them, all they could say was "My heavens! My heavens!" I say till dawn; but our kitchen might have given on a city air-shaft for all the dawn we got.

It is hard to give any one who has lived always in the shelter of the land an idea of the day that followed, hour by waiting hour—how folks walked the beaches and did not look at each other in passing, and how others, climbing the bluff to have a better sight of the waters beyond the Head, found themselves blinded by the smother at fifty yards and yet still continued to stare.

Of them all, that day, Mary Matheson was the only one who kept still. And she was as still as an image. Standing half-hidden in the untidy nook behind the grocery, she remained staring out through the harbor mists from dawn till another heavy night came down, and no one can say whether she would have gone home

then had not the appalled widow, her mother, slipped down between the houses to take her.

She was at home, at any rate, when Joshua Blake came back.

After all that waiting and watching, no one saw him land on the battered, black beach, for it was in the dead hour of the morning; of the three persons who are said to have met him on his way to Mary's, two were so tardy with their claims that a doubt has been cast on them. I do believe, tho, that Mother Polly Freeman, the west-end midwife, saw him and spoke with him in the light thrown from the drug-store window (where had I only known enough to be awake, I might have looked down on them from my bed-room and got some fame of my own).

She says she thought at first he was a ghost come up from the bottom of the sea, with his clothes plastered thin to his body, weed in his hair, and his face drawn and creased like fish-flesh taken too soon out of the pickle. Afterward, when he spoke, she thought he was crazy.

"I've got it!" he said, taking hold of her arm. Opening a blue hand he held it out in the light for her to see the ring that had bitten his palm with the grip. "See, I've got it, Mother Poll!" She says it was hardly more than a whisper, like a secret, and that there was a look in his eyes as if he had seen the Devil face to face.

She meant to run when he let her go, but when she saw him striding off toward Mary Matheson's her better wisdom prevailed; following along the lane and taking shelter behind Gramma Pilot's fence, she waited, watched, and listened, to the enduring gain of Urkey's sisterhood.

She used to tell it well, Mother Poll. Remembering her tale now, I think I can see the earth misting under the trees in the calm dawn, and hear Joshua's first pounding, pounding, on the panels of the door.

It must have been queer for Mother Poll. For while she heard that hollow pounding under the portico, like the pounding of a heart in some deep bosom of horror—all the while she could see Mary herself in an upper window—just her face resting on one cold, still forearm on the sill. And her eyes, Mother Poll says, were enough to make one pity her.

It was strange that she was so lazy, not to move or to speak in answer while the summons of the triumphant lover went on booming through the lower house. *He* must have wondered. Perhaps it was then that the first shadow of the ghost of doubt crept over him, or perhaps it was when, stepping out on the turf, he raised his eyes and discovered Mary's face in the open window.

He said nothing. But with a wide, uncontrolled gesture he held up the ring for her to see. After a moment she opened her lips.

"Where's Andrew?"

That seemed to be the last straw; a feverish anger laid hold of him. "Here's the ring! You see it! Damnation, Mary! You gave your word and I took it, and God knows what I've been through. Now come! Get your things on and bring your mother if you like—but to Minister Malden's you go with me *now!* You hear, Mary? I'll not wait!"

"Where's Andrew?"

"Andrew? Andrew? Why the devil do you keep on asking for Andrew? What's *Andrew* to you—now?"

"Where is he?"

"Mary, you're a fool!"

Her voice grew if anything more monotonous; his, higher and wilder.

"You're a fool," he cried again, "if you don't know where Andrew is."

"He's gone."

"Gone, yes! And how you can say it like that, so calm—God!"

"I knew he was gone," she said. "He told Rolldown he was going to other parts. But I knew it before that—when he turned at the door and looked at me, Joshua. He said it as plain: 'If *that's* love,' he said, 'then I'm going off somewhere and forget it, and never come back to Urkey any more.' "

The deadness went out of her voice, and it lifted to another note. "Joshua, he's got to come back, for I can't bear it. I gave you my word, and I'll marry you—when Andrew comes back to stand at the wedding. He's got to—*got* to!"

Mother Poll said that Joshua stared at her—simply stood there and stared up at her in the queer, cold dawn, his mouth hanging open as if with a kind of horror. Sweat shone on his face. Turning away without a word by and by he laid an uncertain course for the gate, and leaving it open behind him went off through the vapors of the cow street to the east.

As they carried him along step by step, I think, the feet of the cheated gambler grew heavier and heavier, his shoulders collapsed, the head, with the memory in it he could never lose, hung down, and hell received his soul.

It is impossible in so short a space to tell what the next ten years did to those two. It would have been easier for Mary Matheson in a city, for in a city there

is always the blankness of the crowd. In a village there is no such blessed thing as a stranger, the membership committee of the only club is the doctor and the midwife, and all the houses are made of glass.

In a city public opinion is mighty, but devious. In a village, especially in an island village, it is as direct and violent as any "act of God" written down in a ship's insurance papers. A word carries far over the fences, and where it drops, like a swelling seed, a dozen words spring up.

"It's a shame, Milly, a living shame, as sure's you're alive."

"You never said truer, Belle. As if 'twa'n't enough she should send Andy to his death o' drownding——"

"Well, I hope she's satisfied, what she's done for Joshua. I saw him to the post-office last evening, and the hang-dog look of him——"

"Yes, I saw him, too. A man can't stand being made a fool of. . . ."

So, in the blue of a wash-day morning the words went winging back and forth between the blossoming lines. Or, in a Winter dusk up to the westward, where old Mrs. Paine scuttled about under the mackerel-twine of her chicken-pen:

"Land alive, it's all very well to talk Temp'rance, and I'm not denying it'd be a mercy for some folks—I ain't mentioning no names—not even Miah White's. But, land sakes how you going to talk Temp'rance to a man bereft and be-fooled like Joshua Blake? Where's your rime-nor-reason? Where's your argument?"

Or there came Miah White himself up our outside stair on the darkest evening of our Spring weather, and one glance at his crimson face was enough to tell what all the Temperance they had preached to *him* had come

to. Miah turned to the bottle as another man might to prayer.

"By the Lord!" he protested thickly. "Something's got to be done!"

"Done? About what?" I remember my cousin peering curiously at him through the smoke and spatter of the sausage he was frying.

"About Josh, of course, and *her*. I tell you, Dunc, 'tain't right, and I'll not bear it. I'll not see Josh, same as I seen him this night, standing there in the dark of the outside beach and staring at the water like a sleep-walker, staring and staring as if he'd stare right through it and down to the bottom of the sea where his brother lay, and saying to himself, *Who's to pay the bill? Who's to pay the bill?* No, siree! You and I are young fellows, Dunc, but we ain't so young we can't remember them boys' father, and I guess he done a thing or two for us, eh?"

"Yes," Duncan agreed calmly. "But what's to be done?"

"God knows! But look here, Dunc, you're constable, ain't you?"

Duncan smiled pityingly, as if to say, "Don't be an idiot, Miah."

"And if you're constable, and a man owes a bill he won't pay, why then you've something to say in it, ain't I right? Well, here's a bill to pay, fair and square. All this wool she'd pull over our eyes about Andrew and the India ship—as if *that* made a mite of difference one way or the other! No, siree, Dunc, she give her word to take the man that fetched the ring—that man's Joshua—the bargain's filled on his side—and there you are. Now, you're constable. I take it right, Duncan, you should give that girl a piece of your mind; give

her to understand that, India ship yes, India ship no, she's got a bill to pay and a man's soul to save from damnation everlasting."

All Duncan could do with him that night was to smile and shake his head, as much as to say, "You're a wild one, Miah, sure enough."

About Mary's sullen, stubborn belief in the "India ship," pretended or real as it may have been with her, but already growing legendary, I know only in the largest and mistiest way.

It is true there had been a ship that looked like an east-going clipper in our waters on that fateful night. Every one had seen it before dark came on, standing down from the north and laying a course to weather the Head if possible before the weather broke. It was Mary's claim that Andrew had pointed it out to her and spoken of it—in a strange way, a kind of a wistful way, she said. And later that night, what better for a man on the way to exile than a heaven-sent, outbound India ship, hove to under the lee of the Head.

Yes, yes, it was so—it *must* be so. And when they laughed at her in Urkey Village and winked sagely at her assumption of faith, then she asked them to tell her one thing: had any one's eyes seen Andrew's boat go down—actually.

"If Joshua will answer me, and say that he *knows* Andrew went down! Or if any of you will tell me that Andrew's body ever came ashore on any of the islands or the main!"

It was quite absurd, of course, but none of them could answer that, none but Miah White, and he only when he had had a drop out of the bottle and perceived that it weighed not an ounce in either scale.

Picked out so and written down, you would think

this drama overshadowed all my little world. Naturally it didn't. You must remember I was a boy, with a thousand other things to do and a million other things to think of, meals to eat, lessons to hate, stones to throw, apples to steal, fights to fight. I take my word that by the time I was nine or ten the whole tragic episode had gone out of my head. Meeting Mary Matheson on the street, where she came but rarely, she was precisely as mysterious and precisely as uninteresting as any other grown-up. And if I saw Joshua Blake (who, pulling himself by the bootstraps out of drink and despair, had gone into Mr. Dow's law-office and grown as hard as nails)—if I saw him, I say, my only romantic thought of him was the fact that I had broken his wood-shed window, and that, with an air of sinister sagacity, he had told several boys he knew who the culprit was. (A statement, by the way, which I believed horribly for upward of eighteen months.)

I believe that we knew, in a dim sort of way, that the two were "engaged," just as we knew, vaguely, that they never got married. And that was the end of speculation. Having always been so, the phenomenon needed no more to be dwelt on than the fact that when the wind was in the east John Dyer thought he was Oliver Cromwell, or that Minister Malden did not live with his family.

John Dyer had been taken beyond the power of any planetary wind; Minister Malden (as I have told in another place) had gone back to live with his family: and I had been away to Highmarket Academy for two years, before I had sudden and moving reason to take stock of that long-buried drama.

It was three days after I had come home for the long vacation, and, being pretty well tired out with

sniffing about the island like a cat returned to the old house, I sprawled at rest on the "Wreck of the Lillian" stone in the graveyard on Rigg's Dome.

It was then, as the dusk crept up from the shadow under the bluff, that I became aware of another presence among the gravestones and turned my head to peer through the barberries that hedged the stone, thinking it might be one of the girls. It was only Mary Matheson. Vaguely disappointed, I should have returned my gaze to the sea and forgotten her had it not been for two things.

One of them was her attitude. That made me keep on looking at her, and so looking at her, and having come unwittingly to a most obscurely unsettled age, I made a discovery. This was that Mary Matheson, at the remote age of thirty, had a deeper and fuller beauty than had any of the girls for whose glances I brushed my hair wet and went to midweek prayer-meeting.

I find it hard to convey the profound, revolutionary violence of this discovery. It is enough to say that, along with a sensation of pinkness, there came a feeling of obscure and unreasoning bitterness against the world.

My eyes had her there, a figure faintly rose-colored against the deepening background of the sea. She stood erect and curiously still beside a grave, her hands clenched, her eyes narrowed. In Urkey they always put up a stone for a man lost at sea; very often they went further for the comfort of their souls and mounded the outward likeness of an inward grave. Well, that was Andrew's stone and Andrew's grave. Some one in the Memorial Day procession last week had laid a wreath of lilacs under the stone. And now, wandering alone, Mary Matheson had come upon it.

I saw her bend and with a fierce gesture catch up the

symbol of death and fling it behind her on the grass. Afterward, as she stood there with her breast heaving and her lips moving as if with pain, I knew I should not be where I was, watching; I knew that no casual ears of mine should hear the cry that came out of her heart:

"No, No, No! They're still trying to kill him—still trying to kill him—all of them! But they sha'n't! They sha'n't!"

I tell you it shook me and it shamed me. I thought I ought to cough or scuff my feet or something, but it seemed too late for that. Moreover the play had taken another turn that made me forget the moralities, quite, and another actor had come quietly upon the scene.

I can't say whether Joshua, seeing Mary on her way to the Dome, had followed her, or whether he had been strolling that way on his own account. He was there, at all events, watching her from beyond the grave, his head slightly inclined, his hands clasped behind him, and his feet apart on the turf. The color of dusk lent a greenish cast to his bloodless face, and the night wind, coming up free over the naked curve of the Dome and flapping the long black tails of his coat, seemed but to accentuate the dead weight of his attitude.

When a minute had gone by I heard his dry voice.

"So, Mary, you're at it again?"

"But they sha'n't!" She seemed to take flame. "It's not right to Andrew nor me. They do it just to mock me, and I know it, and oh! I don't care, but they sha'n't, they sha'n't!"

"Mary," said Joshua, all the smoldering anger of the years coming in his voice, "Mary, I think it's time you stopped being a fool. We've all had enough of it, Mary. Andrew is dead."

She turned on him with a swift, ironical challenge

"You say it *now?* You *know* now? Perhaps you've just made sure; perhaps you've seen his body washed up on one of the beaches—just to-day? Or then why so tardy, Joshua? If you *knew,* why couldn't you say it in so many words ten years ago—five years ago? *Why?"*

"Because——"

"Yes, because? Because?" There was something incredibly ruthless, tiger-like, about this shadow-dwelling woman. "Say it now, Joshua; that you know of a certainty Andrew went down. I dare you again!"

Joshua said it.

"I know of a certainty Andrew went down that night."

"*How* do you know? Did you *see him go down?* Tell me that!"

For a moment, for more than a long moment, her question hung unanswered in the air. And as, straining forward, poised, vibrant, she watched him, she saw the hard, dry mask he had made for himself through those years grow flabby and white as dough; she saw the eyes widening and the lips going loose with the memory he had never uttered.

"Yes," he cried in a loud voice. "You bring me to it, do you?" The man was actually shaking. "Yes, then, I saw Andrew go down that night. I heard him call in the dark. I saw his face on the water. I saw his hand reaching up as the wave brought him by—reaching up to me. I could almost touch it—but not quite. If you knew what the sea was that night, and the wind; how lonely, how dark! God! And here I stand and say it out loud! I couldn't reach his hand—

not quite. . . . I've told you now, Mary, what I swore I'd never tell. . . . *Damn you!*"

With that curse he turned unsteadily on his heel and left her. The shadows among the gravestones down hill laid hands on his broken, shambling figure, and he became a shadow. Once the shadow stumbled. And as if that distant, awkward act had aroused Mary from a kind of lethargy, she broke forward a step, reaching out her arms.

"Joshua!" she called to him, "Joshua, Joshua, come back!"

In the last faint light from the sky where stars began to come, her face was wet with tears of pity and repentance; pity for the man who had walled himself in with that memory; repentance for the sin of her blindness.

"Joshua!" she called again, but he did not seem to hear.

It was too much for me. Feeling more shame than I can tell, and with it a new gnawing bitterness of jealousy, I sneaked out of hiding by the "Lillian" stone and down the Dome toward the moors.

"Good Grandmother!" I know I grew redder and redder as I walked. "I hope I don't have to see *her* again—the old thing!"

But I did, and that before many minutes had elapsed. For fetching back into the village by the ice-house and the back-side track, I was almost in collision with a hurrying shade in the dark under Dow's willows. It was Mary. I shall not forget the queer moment of suspense as she peered into my face, nor the touch of her fingers on my arm, nor the sigh.

"Oh—you're—you're the Means boy."

An embarrassment, pathetic only now in memory, came upon her.

"I—I wonder—" Her confusion grew more painful and her eyes went everywhere in the dark. "You don't happen to have seen any one—any—you haven't seen Mr. Blake, have you?"

"No!" I shook off the hand that still lay, as if forgotten, on my outraged arm. "What you want of *him? He's* no good!"

With that shot for parting I turned and stalked away. Behind me, after a moment, I heard her cry of protest, dismal beyond words.

"Why do you say that, boy? What do you mean by that?"

Having meant nothing at all, except that I would have slain him gladly, I kept my bitter peace and held my way to the westward, leaving her to find her way and her soul in the blind, black shadows under the willow-trees.

No one who lived in Urkey Village then will forget the day it was known that Mary Matheson was going to marry Joshua Blake, at last. An isolated village is like an isolated person, placid-looking to dulness, but in reality almost idiotically emotional. More than anything else, when the news had run, it was like the camp-meeting conversion of a simple soul. First, for the "conviction of sin," there was the calling-up of all the dark, forgotten history, the whispered refurbishing of departed gossip, the ghosts of old angers. Then like the flood of Mercy, the assurance that all was well, having ended well. Everything was forgiven and forgotten, every one was to live happily ever after, and there must be a wedding.

Surely a wedding! The idea that Minister Malden

should come quietly to the house and so have it done without pomp or pageantry—it is laughable to think how that notion fared at the hands of an aroused village. Flowers there were to be, processions, veils, cakes, rice, boots, all the properties dear to the heart of the Roman mob. In the meantime there was to be a vast business of runnings and stitchings, of old women beating eggs and sifting flour, of schoolgirls writing "MARY BLAKE" on forbidden walls with stolen chalk. Dear me!

You might think Mary and Joshua would have rebelled. Curiously, they seemed beyond rebelling. Joshua, especially, was a changed man. His old, hard mask was gone; the looseness of his lips had come to stay, and the wideness of his eyes. One could only think that happiness long-deferred had come under him like a tide of fate, on which he could do no more than drift and smile. He smiled at every one, a nervous, deprecatory smile; to every proposal he agreed: "All right! Splendid! Let's have it done—" And one got the sense somehow of the thought running on: "—right away! Make haste, if you please. Haste! For God's sake, haste!"

If he were hailed on the street, especially from behind, his eyes came to the speaker with a jerk, and sometimes his hand went to his heart. Seeing him so one bright day, and hearing two old men talking behind me, I learned for the first time that the Blake boys' father had died of heart-disease. It is odd that it should have come on Joshua now, quite suddenly, along with his broken mask and his broken secret, his frightened smile, and his, "All right! Splendid!"—("Make haste!")

But so it was. And so we came to the day ap-

pointed. We had a dawn as red as blood that morning, and tho it was clear, there was a feeling of oppression in the air—and another oppression of people's spirits. For the bride's party had the "hack," and Mrs. Dow had spoken for the only other polite conveyance, the Galloway barge, and what was to come of all the fine, hasty gowns in case it came on for a gale or rain?

Is it curious that here and there in that hurrying, waiting afternoon a thought would turn back to another day when a storm was making and a tall ship standing down to weather the Head? For if there was a menace of weather to-day, so, too, was there a ship. We seemed to grow conscious of it by degrees, it drew on so slowly out of the broad, blue, windless south. For hours, in the early afternoon, it seemed scarcely to move on the mirroring surface of the sea. Yet it did move, growing nearer and larger, its huge spread of canvas hanging straight as cerecloth on the poles, and its wooden flanks, by and by, showing the scars and rime of a long voyage put behind it.

Yes, it seems to me it would have been odd, as our eyes went out in the rare leisure moments of that afternoon and fell upon that presence, worn and strange and solitary within the immense ring of the horizon, if there had not been somewhere among us some dim stirring of memory, and of wonder. Not too vivid, perhaps; not strong enough perhaps to outlast the ship's disappearance. For at about five o'clock the craft, which had been standing for the Head, wore slowly to port, and laying its course to fetch around the western side of the island, drifted out of our sight beyond the rampart of the bluffs.

Why it should have done that, no man can say. Why, in the face of coming weather, the ship should

have abandoned the clear course around the Head and chosen instead to hazard the bars and rips that make a good three miles to sea from Pilot's Point in the west—why this hair-brained maneuver should have been attempted will always remain a mystery.

But at least that ship was gone from our sight, and by so much out of our minds. And this was just as well, perhaps, for our minds had enough to take them up just then with all the things overlooked, chairs to fetch, plants to borrow, girls' giggling errands—and in the very midst of this eleventh-hour hub-bub, the sudden advent of storm.

What a catastrophe that was! What a voiceless wail went up in that hour from all the bureaus and wash-stands in the length of Urkey Village! And how glad I was! With what a poisonous joy did I give thanks at the window for every wind-driven drop that spoiled by so much the wedding of a woman nearly twice my age!

The lamps on the street were yellow blurs, and the wind was full of little splashings and screechings and blowing of skirts and wraps when I set out alone for Center Church, wishing heartily I might never get there. That I didn't is the only reason this story was ever told. Not many got there that night (of the men, that is), or if they did they were not to stay long, for something bigger than a wedding was afoot.

The first wind I had of it crossed my path at Heman Street, a huge clattering shadow that turned out to be Si Pilot's team swinging at a watery gallop toward the back-side track, and the wagon-body full of men. I saw their faces as they passed under the Heman Street lamp, James Burke, Fred Burke, Sandy Snow, half a dozen other surfmen home for the summer from the

Point station, and Captain Cook himself hanging on to Sandy's shoulder as he struggled to get his Sunday blacks wriggled into his old, brown oil-cloths. In a wink they were gone, and I, forgetting the stained lights of Center Church, was gone after them. Nor was I alone. There were a dozen shades pounding with me; at the cow street we were a score. I heard the voices of men I couldn't see.

"Aground? Where to?"

"On the outer bar; south'rd end of the outer bar they tell me."

The voices came and went, whipped by the wind.

"What vessel'd you say? Town craft?"

"No—that ship."

"What? Not that—that—*India ship!*"

"Yep—that India ship."

"India ship"—"India ship!" I don't know how it seemed to them, but to me the sound of that legendary name, borne on the gale, seemed strangely like the shadow of some one coming cast across a stage.

I'll not use space to tell how I got across the island; it would be only the confused tale of an hour that seems but a minute now. I lost the track somewhere short of Si Pilot's place, and wading the sand to the west came out on the beach, without the slightest notion of where I was.

I only know it was a majestic and awful place to be alone; majestic with the weight of wind and the rolling thunder of water; the more awful because I could not see the water itself, save for the rare gray ghost of a tongue licking swiftly up the sand to catch at my feet if I did not spring away in time. Once a mother of waves struck at me with a huge, dim timber; I dodged it, I can't say how, and floundered on to the south,

wondering as I peered over my shoulder at the dark if already the ship had broken, and if that thing behind me were one of the ribs come out of her.

That set me to thinking of all the doomed men near me clinging to slippery things they couldn't see, cursing perhaps, or praying their prayers, or perhaps already sliding away, down and down, into the cold, black caves of the sea. And then the shadows seemed to be full of shades, and the surf-tongues were near to catching my inattentive feet.

If the hour across the island seems a minute, the time I groped along the beach seems nights on end. And then one of the shades turned solid, and I was in such a case I had almost bolted before it spoke and I knew it for Rolldown Nickerson, the beachcomber.

He was a good man in ways. But you must remember his business was a vulture's business, and something of it was in his soul. It came out in good wrecking weather. On a night when the bar had caught a fine piece of profit, I give you my word you could almost see Rolldown's neck growing longer and nakeder with suspense. He would have made more of his salvaging had he carried a steadier head: in the rare, golden moments of windfall he sometimes failed to pick and choose. Even now he was loaded down with a dim collection of junk he had grabbed up in the dark, things he knew nothing of, empty bottles and seine-floats, rubbish he had probably passed by a hundred times in his daylight rounds. The saving circumstance was that he kept dropping them in his ardor for still other treasures his blind feet stumbled on. I followed in his wake and I know, for half a dozen times his discards got under my feet and sent me staggering. Once,

moved by some bizarre, thousandth chance of curiosity, I bent and caught one up in passing.

Often and often since then I have wondered what would have happened to the history of the world of my youth if I had not been moved as I was, and bent quite carelessly in passing, and caught up what I did.

Still occupied with keeping my guide in eye, I took stock of the thing with idle fingers; in the blackness my finger-tips were all the eyes I had for so small a thing. It was about the size of a five-pound butter box, I should say; it seemed as it lay in my hand a sort of an old and polished casket, a thing done with an exotic artistry, broad, lacquered surfaces and curves and bits of intricate carving. And I thought it was empty till I shook it and felt the tiny impact of some chambered weight. Already the thing had taken my interest. Catching up I touched Rolldown's arm and shouted in his ear, over the roll of the wind and surf:

"What you make of this, Rolldown?"

He took it and felt it over, dropping half his rubbish in the act. He shook it. It seemed to me I could see his neck growing longer.

"Got somethin' into it," he rumbled.

"Yes, I know. Now let me have it back, Rolldown."

"Somethin' hefty," he continued, and I noticed he had dropped the rest of his treasures now and clung to that. "Somethin' hefty—and valu'ble!"

"But it's mine, I tell you!"

" 'Tain't neither! 'Tain't neither!"

He was walking faster all the while to shake me off, and I to keep with him; our angry voices rose higher in the gale.

I can't help smiling now when I think of the innocent pair of us that night, puffing along the sand in the

blind, wet wind, squabbling like two children over that priceless unseen casket, come up from the waters of the sea.

"It's mine!" I bawled, "and you give it to me!" And I grabbed at his arm again. But this time, letting out a squeal, he shook me off and fled inshore, up the face of the dune, and I not far behind him.

And so, pursued and pursuing, we came suddenly over a spur of the dunes and saw below us on the southward beach the drift-fire the life-savers had made. There were many small figures in the glow, a surf-boat hauled up, I think, and a pearly huddle of alien men.

But on none of this could I take my oath; my thoughts had been jerked back too abruptly to all the other, forgotten drama of that night, the music and the faces in Center Church, the flowers, the bridegroom, and the bride.

For there on the crest before me, given in silhouette against the fire-glow, stood the bride.

How she came there, by what violence or wild stratagem she had got away, what blind path had brought her, a fugitive, across the island—it was all beyond me. But no matter; there she stood before me on the dune at Pilot's Point, as still as a lost statue, tulle and satin, molded by the gale, sheathing her form in low relief like shining marble, her stone-quiet hands at rest on her unstirring bosom, her face set toward the invisible sea. . . . It was queer to see her like that: dim, you know; just shadowed out in mystery by the light that came a long way through the streaming darkness and died as it touched her.

Peering at her, the strangest thought came to me, and it seemed to me she must have been standing there just so. not for minutes, but for hours and days; yes,

standing there all the length of those ten long years, erect on a seaward dune, unmoved by the wild, moving elements, broken water, wailing wind, needle-blown sand—as if her spirit had flown on other business, leaving the quiet clay to wait and watch there till the tides of fate, turning in their appointed progress, should bring back the fabled ship of India to find its grave on the bars at Pilot's Point.

She must have been all ready to go to the church; perhaps she was actually on her way, and it was on the wind of the cow street that the blown tidings of the "India ship" came to her ears. I can't tell you how I was moved by the sight of her in the wistful ruin of bride's-clothes. I can't say what huge, disordered purposes tumbled through my brain as I stood there trying to cough or stir or by some such infinitesimal violence let her know that I, Peter Means, was there—that I understood—that I was stronger than all the men in Urkey Island—that over my dead body alone should any evil come to her now, forever and ever and ever.

As I tell you, I don't know what would have happened then, with all my wild, dark projects of defense, had not the whole house of trance come tumbling about my ears to the tune of a terrified bleating close at hand. It was Rolldown Nickerson, I saw as I wheeled; my forgotten enemy, flinging down the precious old brown casket he had robbed me of, and, still giving vent to that thin, high note of horror, careening, sliding, and spattering off down the sandslope. And as he vanished and his wail grew fainter around a shoulder of the dune, another sound came also to my ears. It was plain that his blind gallop had brought him in collision with another denizen of the night; the protesting outburst came on the wind, and it was the voice of Miah

White—Miah the prophet, the avenger, drunk as a lord and made as one exalted.

There was no time for thought; I didn't need it to know what he was after. Mary had heard, too, and knew, too; it was as if she had been awakened from sleep, and her eyes were "enough to make one pity her," in the old words of Mother Poll. Seeing them on me, and without so much as a glance at the casket-thing which the roll of the sand had brought to rest near her feet, I turned and ran at the best of my legs, down the sand, around the dune's shoulder out of sight, and fairly into the arms of the angel of vengeance. I can still see the dim gray whites of his eyes as he glared at me, and smell the abomination of his curse. But I paid no heed; only made with a struggle to go on.

"This way!" I panted. "To the north'rd! She's heading to the north'rd. I saw her dress just there, just now—"

A little was enough to turn him. As I plunged on, making inland, I heard him trailing me with his ponderous, grunting flesh. His ardor was greater than mine; as we ran I heard his thick voice coming nearer and nearer to my ear.

"'She shall come back,' says I, 'with the hand of iron,' says I."

As always in this exalted state his phraseology grew Biblical.

"'Thou shalt stay here!'" I heard him grunting. "'Here to the church thou shalt stay, Joshua,' says I. 'And she shalt come back with the hand of iron—the hand of iron!'"

"Yes!" I puffed. "That's right, Miah; only hurry. *There!*" I cried.

The rain had lessened, and a rising moon cast a ghost through the wrack, just enough to let us glimpse a figure topping a rise before us. That it was no one but Rolldown, still fleeing the mystery and bleating as he fled, made no difference to the blurred eyes of Miah; he dug his toes into the sand and flung forward in still hotter chase—after a still-faster-speeding quarry.

I'll tell you where we caught Rolldown. It was before the church, within the very outpouring of the colored windows. When Miah discovered who his blowing captive was his rage, for a moment, was something to remember. Then it passed and left him blank and dreary with defeat. The beachcomber himself, pale as putty through his half-grown beard, was beseeching us from the pink penumbra of the Apostle Paul: "You seen it? You seen what I seen?" but Miah wouldn't hear him, and mounting the steps and passing dull-footed through the vestry, came into the veiled light and heavy scent of breath and flowers. Following at his heels I saw the faces of women turned to our entrance with expectation.

Do you know the awful sense of a party that has fallen flat? Do you know the desolation of a hope long deferred—once more deferred?

Joshua was standing in the farthest corner, beyond the pews where Miss Beedie's Sunday School class held. Looking across the sea of inquiring and disappointed faces, I saw him there, motionless, his back turned on all of us. He had been standing so for an hour. they said, staring out of a window at his own shadow cast on the churchyard fence.

It was a distressing moment. When Miah had sunk down in a rear pew and bowed his head in his hands I really think you could have heard the fall of the

proverbial pin. Then, with a scarcely audible rustle, all the faces became the backs of heads and all the eyes went to the figure unstirring by the corner window. And after that, with the same accord, the spell of waiting was broken, whispering ran over the pews, the inevitable was accepted. Folks got up, shuffling their feet, putting on their wraps with the familiar, mild contortions, still whispering, whispering—"What a shame!"—"The idea!"—"I want to know!"

But some among them must have been still peeping at Joshua, for the hush that fell was sudden and complete. Turning, I saw that he had turned from the window at last, showing us his face.

Now we knew what he had been doing for himself in that long hour. His face was once more the mask of a face we had known so many years as Joshua Blake, dry, bitter, self-contained, the eyes shaded under the lids, the lips as thin as hate. He faced us, but it was not at us he looked; it was beyond us, over our heads, at the corner where the door was.

There, framed in the doorway, stood the tardy bride, a figure as white and stark as pagan stone, and a look on her face like the awful, tranquil look of a sleep-walker. Neither did she pay any heed to us, but over our heads she met the eyes of the bridegroom. So for a long breath they confronted each other, steadily. Then we heard her speak.

"He's come!" she said in a clear voice. "Andrew's come back again."

Still she looked at Joshua. He did not move or reply.

"You understand?" I tell you, I who stood under it, that it was queer enough to hear that voice, clear,

strong, and yet somehow shattered, passing over our heads. "You understand, Joshua? Andrew's come back to the wedding, and now I'll marry you—*if you wish.*"

Even yet Joshua did not speak, nor did the dry anger of his face change. He came walking, taking his time, first along the pews at the front, then up the length of the aisle. Coming down a few steps, Mary waited for him, and there was a kind of a smile now on her lips.

Joshua halted before her. Folding his hands behind him he looked her over slowly from head to foot.

"You lie!" That was all he said.

"Oh, no, Joshua. I'm not lying. Andrew has come for the wedding."

"You lie," he repeated in the same impassive tone. "You know I know you lie, Mary, for you know I know that Andrew is dead."

"Yes, yes—" She was fumbling to clear a damp fold of her gown from something held in the crook of her arm. "But I didn't say—"

With that she had the burden uncovered and held forth in her outstretched hand.

She held it out in the light where all of us could see—the thing Rolldown had discarded from his treasures, that I had picked up and been robbed of in the kindly dark—the old brown casket-thing with the polished surfaces and the bits of intricate and ghastly carvings that had once let in the light of day and the sound of words—the old, brown, sea-bitten, sand-scoured skull of Andrew Blake, with the two gold teeth in the upper jaw dulled by the tarnishing tides that had brought it up slowly from its bed in the bottom of the sea. And to think that I had carried it, and felt of it, and not known what it was!

It lay there supine in the nest of Mary's palm, paying us no heed whatever, but fixing its hollow regard on the shadows among the rafters. And Joshua, the brother, made no sound.

His face had gone a curious color, like the pallor of green things sprouting under a stone. His knees caved a little under his weight, and as we watched we saw his hands moving over his own breast, where the heart was, with a strengthless gesture, like a caress. After what seemed a long while we heard his voice, a whisper of horrible fascination.

"Turn it over!"

Mary said nothing, nor did she move to do as he bade. Like some awful play of a cat with a mouse she held quiet and watched him.

"Mary—do as I say—*and turn it over!"*

Her continued, unanswering silence seemed finally to arouse him. His voice turned shrill. Drawing on some last, hidden reservoir of strength, he cried, "Give it to me! It's mine!" and made an astonishing dart, both hands clawing for the relic. But my cousin Duncan was there to step in his way and send him carroming along the fringe of the crowd.

The queer fellow didn't stop or turn or try again; sending up all the while the most unearthly cackle of horror my ears have ever heard, he kept right on through the door and the packed vestry, clawing his way to the open with that brief gift of vitality.

It was so preposterous and so ghastly to see him carrying on so, with his white linen and his fine black wedding-clothes and the gray hair that would have covered a selectman's head in another year—it was all so absurdly horrible that we simply stood as we were in the church and wondered and looked at Mary

Matheson and saw her face still rapt and quiet, and still set in that same bedevilled smile, as if she didn't know that round tears were running in streams down her cheeks.

"Let him go," was all she said.

They didn't let him go for too long a time, for they had seen the stamp of death on the man's face. When they looked for him finally they found him lying in a dead huddle on the grass by Lem White's gate. I shall never forget the look of him in the lantern-light, nor the look of them that crowded around and stared down at him—Duncan, I remember, puzzled—Miah cursing God—and three dazed black men showing the whites of their eyes, strange negroes being brought in from the wreck: for the ship was no India ship after all, but a coffee carrier from Brazil.

But seeing Miah made me remember that long-forgotten question that the lips of this dead man had put to the deaf sea and the blind sky.

"Who is to pay the bill? Who is to pay the bill?"

Well, two of the three had helped to pay the bill now for a girl's light-hearted word. But I think the other has paid the most, for she has had longer to meet the reckoning. She still lives there alone in the house on the cow street. She is an old woman now, but there's not so much as a line on her face nor a thread of white in her hair, and that's bad. That's always bad. That's something like the thing that happened to the Wandering Jew. Yes, I'm quite sure Mary has paid.

But I am near to forgetting the answer to it all. I hadn't so long to wait as most folks had—no longer than an hour of that fateful night. For when I got

home to our kitchen I found my cousin Duncan already there, with the lamp lit. I came in softly on account of the lateness, and that's how I happened to surprize him and glimpse what he had before he could get it out of sight.

I don't know yet how he came by it, but there on the kitchen table lay the skull of Andrew Blake. When I took it, against his protest, and turned it over, I found what Joshua had meant—a hole as clean and round as a gimlet-bore in the bulge at the back of the head. And when, remembering the faint, chambered impact I had felt in shaking the unknown treasure on the beach, I peeped in through the round hole, I made out the shape of a leaden slug nested loosely between two points of bone behind the nose—a bullet, I should say, from an old, single-ball dueling pistol—such a pistol as Joshua Blake had played with in the shadow of apple-trees on that distant afternoon, and carried in his pocket, no doubt, to the warm-lit gaiety of Alma Beedie's birthday party. . . .

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY

By Charles Reade

Chapter I

In Charles the Second's day the "Swan" was denounced by the dramatists as a house where unfaithful wives and mistresses met their gallants.

But in the next century, when John Clarke was the Freeholder, no special imputation of that sort rested on it: it was a country inn with large stables, horsed the Brentford coach, and entertained man and beast on journeys long or short. It had also permanent visitors, especially in summer; for it was near London, and yet a rural retreat; meadows on each side, Hyde Park at back, Knightsbridge Green in front.

Amongst the permanent lodgers was Mr. Gardiner, a substantial man; and Captain Cowen, a retired officer of moderate means, had lately taken two rooms for himself and his son. Mr. Gardiner often joined the company in the public room, but the Cowens kept to themselves up-stairs.

This was soon noticed and resented, in that age of few books and free converse. Some said, "Oh, we are not good enough for him!" others inquired what a half-pay captain had to give himself airs about. Candor interposed and supplied the climax, "Nay, my masters, the Captain may be in hiding from duns, or from the

runners: now I think on't, the York mail was robbed scarce a se'nnight before his worship came a-hiding here."

But the landlady's tongue ran the other way. Her weight was sixteen stone, her sentiments were her interests, and her tongue her tomahawk. "'Tis pity," said she, one day, "some folk can't keep their tongues from blackening of their betters. The Captain is a civil-spoken gentleman—Lord send there were more of them in these parts!—as takes his hat off to me whenever he meets me, and pays his reckoning weekly. If he has a mind to be private, what business is that of yours, or ours? But curs must bark at their betters."

Detraction, thus roughly quelled for certain seconds, revived at intervals whenever Dame Cust's broad back was turned. It was mildly encountered one evening by Gardiner. "Nay, good sirs," said he, "you mistake the worthy Captain. To have fought at Blenheim and Malplaquet, no man has less vanity. 'Tis for his son he holds aloof. He guards the youth like a mother, and will not have him to hear our tap-room jests. He worships the boy—a sullen lout, sirs; but paternal love is blind. He told me once he had loved his wife dearly, and lost her young, and this was all he had of her. 'And,' said he, 'I'd spill blood like water for him, my own the first.'—'Then, sir,' says I, 'I fear he will give you a sore heart one day.'—'And welcome,' says my Captain, and his face like iron."

Somebody remarked that no man keeps out of company who is good company; but Mr. Gardiner parried that dogma. "When young master is abed, my neighbor does sometimes invite me to share a bottle; and a sprightlier companion I would not desire. Such stories of battles, and duels, and love intrigues!"

"Now there's an old fox for you," said one, approvingly. It reconciled him to the Captain's decency to find that it was only hypocrisy.

"I like not—a man—who wears—a mask," hiccuped a hitherto silent personage, revealing his clandestine drunkenness and unsuspected wisdom at one blow.

These various theories were still fermenting in the bosom of the "Swan," when one day there rode up to the door a gorgeous officer, hot from the minister's levee, in scarlet and gold, with an order like a star-fish glittering on his breast. His servant, a private soldier, rode behind him, and, slipping hastily from his saddle, held his master's horse while he dismounted. Just then Captain Cowen came out for his afternoon walk. He started, and cried out, "Colonel Barrington!"

"Ay, brother," cried the other, and instantly the two officers embraced, and even kissed each other, for that feminine custom had not yet retired across the Channel; and these were soldiers who had fought and bled side by side, and nursed each other in turn; and your true soldier does not nurse by halves; his vigilance and tenderness are an example to women, and he rustleth not.

Captain Cowen invited Colonel Barrington to his room, and that warrior marched down the passage after him, single file, with long brass spurs and saber clinking at his heels; and the establishment ducked and smiled, and respected Captain Cowen for the reason we admire the moon.

Seated in Cowen's room, the newcomer said, heartily, "Well, Ned, I come not empty-handed. Here is thy pension at last;" and handed him a parchment with a seal like a poached egg.

Cowen changed color, and thanked him with an

emotion he rarely betrayed, and gloated over the precious document. His cast-iron features relaxed, and he said, "It comes in the nick of time, for now I can send my dear Jack to college."

This led somehow to an exposure of his affairs. He had just £110 a year, derived from the sale of his commission, which he had invested, at fifteen per cent, with a well-known mercantile house in the City. "So now," said he, "I shall divide it all in three; Jack will want two parts to live at Oxford, and I can do well enough here on one." The rest of the conversation does not matter, so I dismiss it and Colonel Barrington for the time. A few days afterward Jack went to college, and Captain Cowen reduced his expenses, and dined at the shilling ordinary, and, indeed, took all his moderate repasts in public.

Instead of the severe and reserved character he had worn while his son was with him, he now shone out a boon companion, and sometimes kept the table in a roar with his marvellous mimicries of all the characters, male or female, that lived in the inn or frequented it, and sometimes held them breathless with adventures, dangers, intrigues, in which a leading part had been played by himself or his friends.

He became quite a popular character, except with one or two envious bodies, whom he eclipsed; they revenged themselves by saying it was all braggadocio; his battles had been fought over a bottle, and by the fireside.

The district east and west of Knightsbridge had long been infested with footpads; they robbed passengers in the country lanes, which then abounded, and sometimes on the King's highway, from which those lanes offered an easy escape.

One moonlight night Captain Cowen was returning home alone from an entertainment at Fulham, when suddenly the air seemed to fill with a woman's screams and cries. They issued from a lane on his right hand. He whipped out his sword and dashed down the lane. It took a sudden turn, and in a moment he came upon three footpads, robbing and maltreating an old gentleman and his wife. The old man's sword lay at a distance, struck from his feeble hand; the woman's tongue proved the better weapon, for, at least, it brought an ally.

The nearest robber, seeing the Captain come at him with his drawn sword glittering in the moonshine, fired hastily, and grazed his cheek, and was skewered like a frog the next moment; his cry of agony mingled with two shouts of dismay, and the other footpads fled; but, even as they turned, Captain Cowen's nimble blade entered the shoulder of one, and pierced the fleshy part. He escaped, however, but howling and bleeding.

Captain Cowen handed over the lady and gentleman to the people who flocked to the place, now the work was done, and the disabled robber to the guardians of the public peace, who arrived last of all. He himself withdrew apart and wiped his sword very carefully and minutely with a white pocket-handkerchief and then retired.

He was so far from parading his exploit that he went round by the park and let himself into the "Swan" with his private key, and was going quietly to bed, when the chambermaid met him, and up flew her arms, with cries of dismay. "Oh, Captain! Captain! Look at you—smothered in blood! I shall faint."

"Tush! Silly wench!" said Captain Cowen. "I am not hurt."

"Not hurt, sir? And bleeding like a pig! Your cheek—your poor cheek!"

Captain Cowen put up his hand, and found that blood was really welling from his cheek and ear.

He looked grave for a moment, then assured her it was but a scratch, and offered to convince her of that. "Bring me some luke-warm water, and thou shalt be my doctor. But, Barbara, prithee publish it not."

Next morning an officer of justice inquired after him at the "Swan," and demanded his attendance at Bow Street, at two that afternoon, to give evidence against the foot-pads. This was the very thing he wished to avoid; but there was no evading the summons.

The officer was invited into the bar by the landlady, and sang the gallant Captain's exploit, with his own variations. The inn began to ring with Cowen's praises. Indeed, there was now but one detractor left—the hostler, Daniel Cox, a drunken fellow of sinister aspect, who had for some time stared and lowered at Captain Cowen, and muttered mysterious things, doubts as to his being a real captain, etc. Which incoherent murmurs of a muddle-headed drunkard were not treated as oracular by any human creature, tho the stable-boy once went so far as to say, "I sometimes almost thinks as how our Dan do know summut; only he don't rightly know what 'tis, along o' being always muddled in liquor."

Cowen, who seemed to notice little, but noticed everything, had observed the lowering looks of this fellow, and felt he had an enemy: it even made him a little uneasy, tho he was too proud and self-possessed to show it.

With this exception, then, everybody greeted him

with hearty compliments, and he was cheered out of the inn, marching to Bow Street.

Daniel Cox, who—as accidents will happen—was sober that morning, saw him out, and then put on his own coat.

"Take thou charge of the stable, Sam," said he.

"Why, where be'st going, at this time o' day?"

"I be going to Bow Street," said Daniel doggedly.

At Bow Street Captain Cowen was received with great respect, and a seat given him by the sitting magistrate while some minor cases were disposed of.

In due course the highway robbery was called and proved by the parties who, unluckily for the accused, had been actually robbed before Cowen interfered.

Then the oath was tendered to Cowen; he stood up by the magistrate's side and deposed, with military brevity and exactness, to the facts I have related, but refused to swear to the identity of the individual culprit who stood pale and trembling at the dock.

The attorney for the Crown, after pressing in vain, said, "Quite right, Captain Cowen; a witness cannot be too scrupulous."

He then called an officer, who had found the robber leaning against a railing fainting from loss of blood, scarce a furlong from the scene of the robbery, and wounded in the shoulder. That let in Captain Cowen's evidence, and the culprit was committed for trial, and soon after peached upon his only comrade at large. The other lay in the hospital at Newgate.

The magistrate complimented Captain Cowen on his conduct and his evidence, and he went away universally admired. Yet he was not elated, nor indeed content. Sitting by the magistrate's side, after he had given his evidence, he happened to look all round the Court, and

in a distant corner he saw the enormous mottled nose and sinister eyes of Daniel Cox glaring at him with a strange but puzzled expression.

Cowen had learned to read faces, and he said to himself: "What is there in that ruffian's mind about me? Did he know me years ago? I cannot remember him. Curse the beast—one would almost—think—he is cudgelling his drunken memory. I'll keep an eye on you."

He went home thoughtful and discomposed, because this drunkard glowered at him so. The reception he met with at the "Swan" effaced the impression. He was received with acclamations, and now that publicity was forced on him, he accepted it, and revelled in popularity.

About this time he received a letter from his son, enclosing a notice from the college tutor, speaking highly of his ability, good conduct, devotion to study.

This made the father swell with loving pride.

Jack hinted modestly that there were unavoidable expenses, and his funds were dwindling. He enclosed an account that showed how the money went.

The father wrote back and bade him be easy; he should have every farthing required, and speedily. "For," said he, "my half-year's interest is due now."

Two days after he had a letter from his man of business, begging him to call. He went with alacrity, making sure his money was waiting for him as usual.

His lawyer received him very gravely, and begged him to be seated. He then broke to him some appalling news. The great house of Brown, Molyneux and Co. had suspended payments at noon the day before, and were not expected to pay a shilling in the pound. Captain Cowen's little fortune was gone—all but his pension of eighty pounds a year.

He sat like a man turned to stone; then he clasped his hands with agony, and uttered two words—no more —"My son!"

He rose and left the place like one in a dream. He got down to Knightsbridge, he hardly knew how. At the very door of the inn he fell down in a fit. The people of the inn were round him in a moment, and restoratives freely supplied. His sturdy nature soon revived; but, with the moral and physical shock, his lips were slightly distorted over his clenched teeth. His face, too, was ashy pale.

When he came to himself, the first face he noticed with that of Daniel Cox, eying him, not with pity, but with puzzled curiosity. Cowen shuddered and closed his own eyes to avoid this blighting glare. Then, without opening them, he muttered, "What has befallen me? I feel no wound."

"Laws forbid, sir!" said the landlady, leaning over him. "Your honor did but swoon for once, to show you was born of a woman and not made of nought but steel. Here, you gaping loons and sluts, help the Captain to his room amongst ye, and then go about your business."

This order was promptly executed, so far as assisting Captain Cowen to rise; but he was no sooner on his feet than he waved them all from him haughtily, and said, "Let me be. It is the mind—it is the mind;" and he smote his forehead in despair, for now it all came back on him.

Then he rushed into the inn, and locked himself into his room. Female curiosity buzzed about the doors, but was not admitted until he had recovered his fortitude, and formed a bitter resolution to defend himself and his son against all mankind.

At last there came a timid tap, and a mellow voice said, "It is only me, Captain. Prithee let me in."

He opened to her, and there was Barbara with a large tray and snow-white cloth. She spread a table deftly, and uncovered a roast capon, and uncorked a bottle of white port, talking all the time. "The mistress says you must eat a bit, and drink this good wine, for her sake. Indeed, sir, 'twill do you good after your swoon." With many such encouraging words she got him to sit down and eat, and then filled his glass and put it to his lips. He could not eat much, but he drank the white port—a wine much prized, and purer than the purple vintage of our day.

At last came Barbara's post-dict. "But alack! to think of your fainting dead away! O Captain, what is the trouble?"

The tear was in Barbara's eye, tho she was the emissary of Dame Cust's curiosity, and all curiosity herself.

Captain Cowen, who had been expecting this question for some time, replied, doggedly, "I have lost the best friend I had in the world."

"Dear heart!" said Barbara, and a big tear of sympathy, that had been gathering ever since she entered the room, rolled down her cheeks.

She put up a corner of her apron to her eyes. "Alas, poor soul!" said she. "Ay, I do know how hard it is to love and lose; but bethink you, sir, 'tis the lot of man. Our own turn must come. And you have your son left to thank God for, and a warm friend or two in this place, tho they be but humble."

"Ay, good wench," said the soldier, his iron nature touched for a moment by her goodness and simplicity,

"and none I value more than thee. But leave me awhile."

The young woman's honest cheeks reddened at the praise of such a man. "Your will's my pleasure, sir," said she, and retired, leaving the capon and the wine.

Any little compunction he might have at refusing his confidence to this humble friend did not trouble him long. He looked on women as leaky vessels; and he had firmly resolved not to make his situation worse by telling the base world that he was poor. Many a hard rub had put a fine point on this man of steel.

He glozed the matter, too, in his own mind. "I told her no lie. I have lost my best friend, for I've lost my money."

From that day Captain Cowen visited the tap-room no more, and indeed seldom went out by daylight. He was all alone now, for Mr. Gardiner was gone to Wiltshire to collect his rents. In his solitary chamber Cowen ruminated his loss and the villany of mankind, and his busy brain revolved scheme after scheme to repair the impending ruin of his son's prospects. It was there the iron entered his soul. The example of the very foot-pads he had baffled occurred to him in his more desperate moments, but he fought the temptation down: and in due course one of them was transported, and one hung; the other languished in Newgate.

By and by he began to be mysteriously busy, and the door always locked. No clue was ever found to his labors but bits of melted wax in the fender and a tuft or two of gray hair, and it was never discovered in Knightsbridge that he often begged in the City at dusk, in a disguise so perfect that a frequenter of the

"Swan" once gave him a groat. Thus did he levy his tax upon the stony place that had undone him.

Instead of taking his afternoon walk as heretofore, he would sit disconsolate on the seat of a staircase window that looked into the yard, and so take the air and sun: and it was owing to this new habit he overheard, one day, a dialog in which the foggy voice of the hostler predominated at first. He was running down Captain Cowen to a pot-boy. The pot-boy stood up for him. That annoyed Cox. He spoke louder and louder the more he was opposed, till at last he bawled out, "I tell ye I've seen him a-sitting by the judge, and I've seen him in the dock."

At these words Captain Cowen recoiled, tho he was already out of sight, and his eye glittered like a basilisk's.

But immediately a new voice broke upon the scene, a woman's. "Thou foul-mouthed knave! Is it for thee to slander men of worship, and give the inn a bad name? Remember I have but to lift my finger to hang thee, so drive me not to't. Begone to thy horses this moment; thou art not fit to be among Christians. Begone, I say, or it shall be the worse for thee;" and she drove him across the yard, and followed him up with a current of invectives, eloquent even at a distance tho the words were no longer distinct: and who should this be but the housemaid, Barbara Lamb, so gentle, mellow, and melodious before the gentlefolk, and especially her hero, Captain Cowen!

As for Daniel Cox, he cowered, writhed, and wriggled away before her, and slipped into the stable.

Captain Cowen was now soured by trouble, and this persistent enmity of that fellow roused at last a fixed

and deadly hatred in his mind, all the more intense that fear mingled with it.

He sounded Barbara; asked her what nonsense that ruffian had been talking, and what he had done that she could hang him for. But Barabara would not say a malicious word against a fellow-servant in cold blood. "I can keep a secret," said she. "If he keeps his tongue off you, I'll keep mine."

"So be it," said Cowen. "Then I warn you I am sick of his insolence; and drunkards must be taught not to make enemies of sober men nor fools of wise men." He said this so bitterly that, to soothe him, she begged him not to trouble about the ravings of a sot. "Dear heart," said she, "nobody heeds Dan Cox."

Some days afterward she told him that Dan had been drinking harder than ever, and wouldn't trouble honest folk long, for he had the delusions that go before a drunkard's end; why, he had told the stable-boy he had seen a vision of himself climb over the garden wall, and enter the house by the back door. "The poor wretch says he knew himself by his bottle nose and his cowskin waistcoat; and, to be sure, there is no such nose in the parish—thank Heaven for't!—and not many such waistcoats." She laughed heartily, but Cowen's lip curled in a venomous sneer. He said: "More likely 'twas the knave himself. Look to your spoons, if such a face as that walks by night." Barbara turned grave directly; he eyed her askant, and saw the random shot had gone home.

Captain Cowen now often slept in the City, alleging business.

Mr. Gardiner wrote from Salisbury, ordering his room to be ready and his sheets well aired.

One afternoon he returned with a bag and a small

valise, prodigiously heavy. He had a fire lighted, tho it was a fine autumn, for he was chilled with his journey, and invited Captain Cowen to sup with him. The latter consented, but begged it might be an early supper, as he must sleep in the City.

"I am sorry for that," said Gardiner. "I have a hundred and eighty guineas there in that bag, and a man could get into my room from yours."

"Not if you lock the middle door," said Cowen. "But I can leave you the key of my outer door, for that matter."

This offer was accepted; but still Mr. Gardiner felt uneasy. There had been several robberies at inns, and it was a rainy, gusty night. He was depressed and ill at ease. Then Captain Cowen offered him his pistols, and helped him load them—two bullets in each. He also went and fetched him a bottle of the best port, and after drinking one glass with him, hurried away, and left his key with him for further security.

Mr. Gardiner, left to himself, made up a great fire and drank a glass or two of the wine; it seemed remarkably heady and raised his spirits. After all, it was only for one night; to-morrow he would deposit his gold in the bank. He began to unpack his things and put his nightdress to the fire; but by and by he felt so drowsy that he did but take his coat off, put his pistols under the pillow, and lay down on the bed and fell fast asleep.

That night Barbara Lamb awoke twice, thinking each time she heard doors open and shut on the floor below her.

But it was a gusty night, and she concluded it was most likely the wind. Still a residue of uneasiness made her rise at five instead of six, and she lighted

her tinder and came down with a rushlight. She found Captain Cowen's door wide open; it had been locked when she went to bed. That alarmed her greatly. She looked in. A glance was enough. She cried, "Thieves! thieves!" and in a moment uttered scream upon scream.

In an incredibly short time pale and eager faces of men and women filled the passage.

Cowen's room, being open, was entered first. On the floor lay what Barbara had seen at a glance—his portmanteau rifled and the clothes scattered about. The door of communication was ajar; they opened it, and an appalling sight met their eyes: Mr. Gardiner was lying in a pool of blood and moaning feebly. There was little hope of saving him; no human body could long survive such a loss of the vital fluid. But it so happened there was a country surgeon in the house. He stanched the wounds—there were three—and somebody or other had the sense to beg the victim to make a statement. He was unable at first; but, under powerful stimulants, revived at last, and showed a strong wish to aid justice in avenging him. By this time they had got a magistrate to attend, and he put his ear to the dying man's lips; but others heard, so hushed was the room and so keen the awe and curiosity of each panting heart.

"I had gold in my portmanteau, and was afraid. I drank a bottle of wine with Captain Cowen, and he left me. He lent me his key and his pistols. I locked both doors. I felt very sleepy, and lay down. When I woke, a man was leaning over my portmanteau. His back was toward me. I took a pistol, and aimed steadily. It missed fire. The man turned and sprang on me. I had caught up a knife, one we had for supper. I stabbed him with all my force. He wrested it from

me, and I felt piercing blows. I am slain. Ay, I am slain."

"But the man, sir. Did you not see his face at all?"

"Not till he fell on me. But then, very plainly. The moon shone."

"Pray describe him."

"Broken hat."

"Yes."

"Hairy waistcoat."

"Yes."

"Enormous nose."

"Do you know him?"

"Ay. The hostler, Cox."

There was a groan of horror and a cry for vengeance.

"Silence," said the magistrate. "Mr. Gardiner, you are a dying man. Words may kill. Be careful. Have you any doubts?"

"About what?"

"That the villain was Daniel Cox."

"None whatever."

At these words the men and women, who were glaring with pale faces and all their senses strained at the dying man and his faint yet terrible denunciation, broke into two bands; some remained rooted to the place, the rest hurried, with cries of vengeance, in search of Daniel Cox. They were met in the yard by two constables, and rushed first to the stables, not that they hoped to find him there. Of course he had absconded with his booty.

The stable door was ajar. They tore it open.

The gray dawn revealed Cox fast asleep on the straw in the first empty stall, and his bottle in the manger. His clothes were bloody, and the man was drunk. They pulled him, cursed him, struck him, and would have

torn him in pieces, but the constables interfered, set him up against the rail, like timber, and searched his bosom, and found—a wound; then turned all his pockets inside out, amidst great expectation, and found—three halfpence and the key of the stable door.

Chapter II

They ransacked the straw, and all the premises, and found—nothing.

Then, to make him sober and get something out of him, they pumped upon his head till he was very nearly choked. However, it told on him. He gasped for breath awhile, and rolled his eyes, and then coolly asked them had they found the villain.

They shook their fists at him. "Ay, we have found the villain, red-handed."

"I mean him as prowls about these parts in my waistcoat, and drove his knife into me last night—wonder a didn't kill me out of hand. Have ye found him amongst ye?"

This question met with a volley of jeers and execrations, and the constables pinioned him, and bundled him off in a cart to Bow Street, to wait examination.

Meantime two Bow Street runners came down with a warrant, and made a careful examination of the premises. The two keys were on the table. Mr. Gardiner's outer door was locked. There was no money either in his portmanteau or Captain Cowen's. Both pistols were found loaded, but no priming in the pan of the one that lay on the bed; the other was primed, but the bullets were above the powder.

Bradbury, one of the runners, took particular notice of all.

Outside, blood was traced from the stable to the garden wall, and under this wall, in the grass, a bloody knife was found belonging to the "Swan" Inn. There was one knife less in Mr. Gardiner's room than had been carried up to his supper.

Mr. Gardiner lingered till noon, but never spoke again.

The news spread swiftly, and Captain Cowen came home in the afternoon, very pale and shocked.

He had heard of a robbery and murder at the "Swan," and came to know more. The landlady told him all that had transpired, and that the villain Cox was in prison.

Cowen listened thoughtfully, and said: "Cox! No doubt he is a knave; but murder!—I should never have suspected him of that."

The landlady pooh-poohed his doubts. "Why, sir, the poor gentleman knew him, and wounded him in self-defense, and the rogue was found a-bleeding from that very wound, and my knife, as done the murder, not a stone's throw from him as done it, which it was that Dan Cox, and he'll swing for't, please God." Then, changing her tone, she said, solemnly, "You'll come and see him, sir?"

"Yes," said Cowen, resolutely, with scarce a moment's hesitation.

The landlady led the way, and took the keys out of her pocket, and opened Cowen's door. "We keep all locked," said she, half apologetically; "the magistrate bade us; and everything as we found it—God help us! There—look at your portmanteau. I wish you may not have been robbed as well."

"No matter," said he.

"But it matters to me," said she, "for the credit of

the house." Then she gave him the key of the inner door, and waved her hand toward it, and sat down and began to cry.

Cowen went in and saw the appalling sight. He returned quickly, looking like a ghost, and muttered, "This is a terrible business."

"It is a bad business for me and all," said she. "He have robbed you too, I'll go bail."

Captain Cowen examined his trunk carefully. "Nothing to speak of," said he. "I've lost eight guineas and my gold watch."

"There!—there!—there!" cried the landlady.

"What does that matter, dame? He has lost his life."

"Ay, poor soul. But 'twon't bring him back, you being robbed and all. Was ever such an unfortunate woman? Murder and robbery in my house! Travelers will shun it like a pest-house. And the new landlord he only wanted a good excuse to take it down altogether."

This was followed by more sobbing and crying. Cowen took her down-stairs into the bar and comforted her. They had a glass of spirits together, and he encouraged the flow of her egotism, till at last she fully persuaded herself it was her calamity that one man was robbed and another murdered in her house.

Cowen, always a favorite, quite won her heart by falling into this view of the matter, and when he told her he must go back to the City again, for he had important business, and besides had no money left, either in his pockets or his rifled valise, she encouraged him to go, and said, kindly, indeed it was no place for him now; it was very good of him to come back at all: but both apartments should be scoured and made

decent in a very few days; and a new carpet down in Mr. Gardiner's room.

So Cowen went back to the City, and left this notable woman to mop up her murder.

At Bow Street next morning, in answer to the evidence of his guilt, Cox told a tale which the magistrate said was even more ridiculous than most of the stories uneducated criminals get up on such occasions; with this single comment he committed Cox for trial.

Everybody was of the magistrate's opinion, except a single Bow Street runner, the same who had already examined the premises. This man suspected Cox, but had one qualm of doubt founded on the place where he had discovered the knife, and the circumstance of the blood being traced from that place to the stable, and not from the inn to the stable, and on a remark Cox had made to him in the cart. "I don't belong to the house. I haan't got no keys to go in and out o' nights. And if I took a hatful of gold, I'd be off with it into another country—wouldn't you? Him as took the gentleman's money, he knew where 'twas, and he have got it: I didn't and I haan't."

Bradbury came down to the "Swan," and asked the landlady a question or two. She gave him short answers. He then told her that he wished to examine the wine that had come down from Mr. Gardiner's room.

The landlady looked him in the face, and said it had been drunk by the servants or thrown away long ago.

"I have my doubts of that," said he.

"And welcome," said she.

Then he wished to examine the keyholes.

"No," said she; "there has been prying enough into my house."

Said he angrily, "You are obstructing justice. It is very suspicious."

"It is you that is suspicious, and a mischief-maker into the bargain," said she. "How do I know what you might put into my wine and my keyholes, and say you found it? You are well known, you Bow Street runners, for your hanky-panky tricks. Have you got a search-warrant, to throw more discredit upon my house? No? Then pack! and learn the law before you teach it me."

Bradbury retired, bitterly indignant, and his indignation strengthened his faint doubt of Cox's guilt.

He set a friend to watch the "Swan," and he himself gave his mind to the whole case, and visited Cox in Newgate three times before his trial.

The next novelty was that legal assistance was provided for Cox by a person who expressed compassion for his poverty and inability to defend himself, guilty or not guilty; and that benevolent person was—Captain Cowen.

In due course Daniel Cox was arraigned at the bar of the Old Bailey for robbery and murder.

The deposition of the murdered man was put in by the Crown, and the witnesses sworn who heard it, and Captain Cowen was called to support a portion of it. He swore that he supped with the deceased and loaded one pistol for him while Mr. Gardiner loaded the other; lent him the key of his own door for further security, and himself slept in the City.

The judge asked him where, and he said, "13 Farringdon Street."

It was elicited from him that he had provided counsel for the prisoner.

His evidence was very short and to the point. It

did not directly touch the accused, and the defendant's counsel—in spite of his client's eager desire—declined to cross-examine Captain Cowen. He thought a hostile examination of so respectable a witness, who brought nothing home to the accused, would only raise more indignation against his client.

The prosecution was strengthened by the reluctant evidence of Barbara Lamb. She deposed that three years ago Cox had been detected by her stealing money from a gentleman's table in the "Swan" Inn, and she gave the details.

The judge asked her whether this was at night.

"No, my lord; at about four of the clock. He is never in the house at night; the mistress can't abide him."

"Has he any key of the house?"

"Oh, dear, no, my lord."

The rest of the evidence for the Crown is virtually before the reader.

For the defense it was proved that the man was found drunk, with no money nor keys upon him, and that the knife was found under the wall, and the blood was traceable from the wall to the stable. Bradbury, who proved this, tried to get in about the wine; but this was stopped as irrelevant. "There is only one person under suspicion," said the judge, rather sternly.

As counsel were not allowed in that day to make speeches to the jury, but only to examine and cross-examine and discuss points of law, Daniel Cox had to speak in his own defense.

"My lord," said he, "it was my double done it."

"Your what?" asked my lord, a little peevishly.

"My double. There's a rogue prowls about the 'Swan' at nights, which you couldn't tell him from me

(laughter). You needn't to laugh me to the gallows. I tell ye he have got a nose like mine." (Laughter.)

Clerk of Arraigns. Keep silence in the court, on pain of imprisonment.

"And he have got a waistcoat the very spit of mine, and a tumble-down hat such as I do wear. I saw him go by and let hisself into the 'Swan' with a key, and I told Sam Pott next morning."

Judge. Who is Sam Pott?

Culprit. Why, my stable-boy, to be sure.

Judge. Is he in court?

Culprit. I don't know. Ay, there he is.

Judge. Then you'd better call him.

Culprit (shouting). Hy! Sam!

Sam. Here be I. (Loud laughter.)

The judge explained, calmly, that to call a witness meant to put him in the box and swear him, and that altho it was irregular, yet he should allow Pott to be sworn, if it would do the prisoner any good.

Prisoner's counsel said he had no wish to swear Mr. Pott.

"Well, Mr. Gurney," said the judge, "I don't think he can do you any harm." Meaning in so desperate a case.

Thereupon Sam Pott was sworn, and deposed that Cox had told him about this double.

"When?"

"Often and often."

"Before the murder?"

"Long afore that."

Counsel for the Crown. Did you ever see this double?

"Not I."

Counsel. I thought not.

Daniel Cox went on to say that on the night of the murder he was up with a sick horse, and he saw his double let himself out of the inn the back way, and then turn round and close the door softly; so he slipped out to meet him. But the double saw him, and made for the garden wall. He ran up and caught him with one leg over the wall, and seized a black bag he was carrying off; the figure dropped it, and he heard a lot of money chink; that thereupon he cried "Thieves!" and seized the man; but immediately received a blow, and lost his senses for a time. When he came to, the man and the bag were both gone, and he felt so sick that he staggered to the stable and drank a pint of neat brandy, and he remembered no more till they pumped on him, and told him he had robbed and murdered a gentleman inside the "Swan" Inn. "What they can't tell me," said Daniel, beginning to shout, "is how I could know who has got money, and who hasn't, inside the 'Swan' Inn. I keeps the stables, not the inn: and where be my keys to open and shut the 'Swan'? I never had none. And where's the gentleman's money? 'Twas somebody in the inn as done it, for to have the money, and when you find the money, you'll find the man."

The prosecuting counsel ridiculed this defense, and *inter alia* asked the jury whether they thought it was a double the witness Lamb had caught robbing in the inn three years ago.

The judge summed up very closely, giving the evidence of every witness. What follows is a mere synopsis of his charge.

He showed it was beyond doubt that Mr. Gardiner returned to the inn with money, having collected his rents in Wiltshire; and this was known in the inn, and

proved by several, and might have transpired in the yard or the taproom. The unfortunate gentleman took Captain Cowen, a respectable person, his neighbor in the inn, into his confidence, and revealed his uneasiness. Captain Cowen swore that he supped with him, but could not stay all night, most unfortunately. But he encouraged him, left him his pistols, and helped him load them.

Then his lordship read the dying man's deposition. The person thus solemnly denounced was found in the stable, bleeding from a recent wound, which seems to connect him at once with the deed as described by the dying man.

"But here," said my lord, "the chain is no longer perfect. A knife, taken from the 'Swan,' was found under the garden wall, and the first traces of blood commenced there, and continued to the stable, and were abundant on the straw and on the person of the accused. This was proved by the constable and others. No money was found on him, and no keys that could have opened any outer doors of the 'Swan' Inn. The accused had, however, three years before been guilty of a theft from a gentleman in the inn, which negatives his pretense that he always confined himself to the stables. It did not, however, appear that on the occasion of the theft he had unlocked any doors, or possessed the means. The witness for the Crown, Barbara Lamb, was clear on that.

"The prisoner's own solution of the mystery was not very credible. He said he had a double—or a person wearing his clothes and appearance; and he had seen this person prowling about long before the murder, and had spoken of the double to one Pott. Pott deposed that Cox had spoken of this double more than

once; but admitted he never saw the double with his own eyes.

"This double, says the accused, on the fatal night let himself out of the 'Swan' Inn and escaped to the garden wall. There he (Cox) came up with this mysterious person, and a scuffle ensued in which a bag was dropped and gave the sound of coin; and then Cox held the man and cried 'Thieves!' but presently received a wound and fainted, and on recovering himself, staggered to the stables and drank a pint of brandy.

"The story sounds ridiculous, and there is no direct evidence to back it; but there is a circumstance that lends some color to it. There was one blood-stained instrument, and no more, found on the premises, and that knife answers to the description given by the dying man, and, indeed, may be taken to be the very knife missing from his room; and this knife was found under the garden wall, and there the blood commenced and was traced to the stable.

"Here," said my lord, "to my mind, lies the defense. Look at the case on all sides, gentlemen: an undoubted murder done by hands; no suspicion resting on any known person but the prisoner—a man who had already robbed in the inn; a confident recognition by one whose deposition is legal evidence, but evidence we cannot cross-examine; and a recognition by moonlight only and in the heat of a struggle.

"If on this evidence, weakened not a little by the position of the knife and the traces of blood, and met by the prisoner's declaration, which accords with that single branch of the evidence, you have a doubt, it is your duty to give the prisoner the full benefit of that doubt, as I have endeavored to do; and if you have no doubt, why then you have only to support the law and

protect the lives of peaceful citizens. Whoever has committed this crime, it certainly is an alarming circumstance that, in a public inn, surrounded by honest people, guarded by locked doors, and armed with pistols, a peaceful citizen can be robbed like this of his money and his life."

The jury saw a murder at an inn; an accused, who had already robbed in that inn, and was denounced as his murderer by the victim. The verdict seemed to them to be Cox, or impunity. They all slept at inns; a double they had never seen; undetected accomplices they had all heard of. They waited twenty minutes, and brought in their verdict—Guilty.

The judge put on his black cap, and condemned Daniel Cox to be hanged by the neck till he was dead.

Chapter III

After the trial was over, and the condemned man led back to prison to await his execution, Bradbury went straight to 13 Farringdon Street and inquired for Captain Cowen.

"No such name here," said the good woman of the house.

"But you keep lodgers?"

"Nay, we keep but one; and he is no captain—he is a City clerk."

"Well, madam, it is not idle curiosity, I assure you, but was not the lodger before him Captain Cowen?"

"Laws, no! it was a parson. Your rakehelly captains wouldn't suit the like of us. 'Twas a reverend clerk, a grave old gentleman. He wasn't very well-to-do, I think: his cassock was worn, but he paid his way."

"Keep late hours?"

"Not when he was in town; but he had a country cure."

"Then you have let him in after midnight."

"Nay, I keep no such hours. I lent him a pass-key. He came in and out from the country when he chose. I would have you to know he was an old man, and a sober man, and an honest man: I'd wager my life on that. And excuse me, sir, but who be you, that do catechize me so about my lodgers?"

"I am an officer, madam."

The simple woman turned pale, and clasped her hands. "An officer!" she cried. "Alack! what have I done now?"

"Why, nothing, madam," said the wily Bradbury. "An officer's business is to protect such as you, not to trouble you, for all the world. There, now, I'll tell you where the shoe pinches. This Captain Cowen has just sworn in a court of justice that he slept here on the 15th of last October."

"He never did, then. Our good parson had no acquaintances in the town. Not a soul ever visited him."

"Mother," said a young girl peeping in, "I think he knew somebody of that very name. He did ask me once to post a letter for him, and it was to some man of worship, and the name was Cowen, yes—Cowen 'twas. I'm sure of it. By the same token, he never gave me another letter, and that made me pay the more attention."

"Jane, you are too curious," said the mother.

"And I am very much obliged to you, my little maid," said the officer, "and also to you, madam," and so took his leave.

One evening, all of a sudden, Captain Cowen ordered

a prime horse at the "Swan," strapped his valise on before him, and rode out of the yard post-haste: he went without drawing bridle to Clapham, and then looked round him, and, seeing no other horseman near, trotted gently round into the Borough, then into the City, and slept at an inn in Holborn. He had bespoken a particular room beforehand,—a little room he frequented. He entered it with an air of anxiety. But this soon vanished after he had examined the floor carefully. His horse was ordered at five o'clock next morning. He took a glass of strong waters at the door to fortify his stomach, but breakfasted at Uxbridge, and fed his good horse. He dined at Beaconsfield, baited at Thame, and supped with his son at Oxford: next day paid all the young man's debts and spent a week with him.

His conduct was strange: boisterously gay and sullenly despondent by turns. During the week came an unexpected visitor, General Sir Robert Barrington. This officer was going out to America to fill an important office. He had something in view for young Cowen, and came to judge quietly of his capacity. But he did not say anything at that time, for fear of exciting hopes he might possibly disappoint.

However, he was much taken with the young man. Oxford had polished him. His modest reticence, until invited to speak, recommended him to older men, especially as his answers were judicious, when invited to give his opinion. The tutors also spoke very highly of him.

"You may well love that boy," said General Barrington to the father.

"God bless you for praising him!" said the other. "Ay, I love him too well."

Soon after the General left, Cowen changed some gold for notes, and took his departure for London, having first sent word of his return. He meant to start after breakfast and make one day of it, but he lingered with his son, and did not cross Magdalen Bridge till one o'clock.

This time he rode through Dorchester, Benson, and Henley, and, as it grew dark, resolved to sleep at Maidenhead.

Just after Hurley Bottom, at four cross-roads, three highwaymen spurred on him from right and left. "Your money or your life!"

He whipped a pistol out of his holster, and pulled at the nearest head in a moment.

The pistol missed fire. The next moment a blow from the butt end of a horse-pistol dazed him, and he was dragged off his horse, and his valise emptied in a minute.

Before they had done with him, however, there was a clatter of hoofs, and the robbers sprang to their nags, and galloped away for the bare life as a troop of yeomanry rode up. The thing was so common, the newcomers read the situation at a glance, and some of the best mounted gave chase. The others attended to Captain Cowen, caught his horse, strapped on his valise, and took him with them into Maidenhead, his head aching, his heart sickening and raging by turns. All his gold gone, nothing left but a few one-pound notes that he had sewed into the lining of his coat.

He reached the "Swan" next day in a state of sullen despair. "A curse is on me," he said. "My pistol missed fire: my gold gone."

He was welcomed warmly. He stared with surprise. Barbara led the way to his old room, and opened it.

He started back. "Not there," he said, with a shudder.

"Alack! Captain, we have kept it for you. Sure you are not afear'd."

"No," said he, doggedly; "no hope, no fear."

She stared, but said nothing.

He had hardly got into the room when, click, a key was turned in the door of communication. "A traveler there!" said he. Then, bitterly, "Things are soon forgotten in an inn."

"Not by me," said Barbara solemnly. "But you know our dame, she can't let money go by her. 'Tis our best room, mostly, and nobody would use it that knows the place. He is a stranger. He is from the wars: will have it he is English, but talks foreign. He is civil enough when he is sober, but when he has got a drop he does maunder away to be sure, and sings such songs I never."

"How long has he been here?" asked Cowen.

"Five days, and the mistress hopes he will stay as many more, just to break the spell."

"He can stay or go," said Cowen. "I am in no humor for company. I have been robbed, girl."

"You robbed, sir? Not openly, I am sure."

"Openly—but by numbers—three of them. I should soon have sped one, but my pistol snapped fire just like his. There, leave me, girl; fate is against me, and a curse upon me. Bubbled out of my fortune in the City, robbed of my gold upon the road. To be honest is to be a fool."

He flung himself on the bed with a groan of anguish, and the ready tears ran down soft Barbara's cheeks. She had tact, however, in her humble way, and did not prattle to a strong man in a moment of wild distress. She just turned and cast a lingering glance of pity on

him, and went to fetch him food and wine. She had often seen an unhappy man the better for eating and drinking.

When she was gone, he cursed himself for his weakness in letting her know his misfortunes. They would be all over the house soon. "Why, that fellow next door must have heard me bawl them out. I have lost my head," said he, "and I never needed it more."

Barbara returned with the cold powdered beef and carrots, and a bottle of wine she had paid for herself. She found him sullen, but composed. He made her solemly promise not to mention his losses. She consented readily, and said, "You know I can hold my tongue."

When he had eaten and drunk, and felt stronger, he resolved to put a question to her. "How about that poor fellow?"

She looked puzzled a moment, then turned pale, and said solemnly, " 'Tis for this day week, I hear. 'Twas to be last week, but the King did respite him for a fortnight."

"Ah! indeed! Do you know why?"

"No, indeed. In his place, I'd rather have been put out of the way at once; for they will surely hang him."

Now in our day the respite is very rare: a criminal is hanged or reprieved. But at the period of our story men were often respited for short or long periods, yet suffered at last. One poor wretch was respited for two years, yet executed. This respite, therefore, was nothing unusual, and Cowen, tho he looked thoughtful, had no downright suspicion of anything so serious to himself as really lay beneath the surface of this not unusual occurrence.

I shall, however, let the reader know more about

it. The judge in reporting the case notified to the proper authority that he desired His Majesty to know he was not entirely at ease about the verdict. There was a lacuna in the evidence against this prisoner. He stated the flaw in a very few words. But he did not suggest any remedy.

Now the public clamored for the man's execution, that travelers might be safe. The King's advisers thought that if the judge had serious doubts, it was his business to tell the jury so. The order for execution issued.

Three days after this the judge received a letter from Bradbury, which I give verbatim.

THE KING vs. COX

"My Lord,—Forgive my writing to you in a case of blood. There is no other way. Daniel Cox was not defended. Counsel went against his wish, and would not throw suspicion on any other. That made it Cox or nobody. But there was a man in the inn whose conduct was suspicious. He furnished the wine that made the victim sleepy—and I must tell you the landlady would not let me see the remnant of the wine. She did everything to baffle me and defeat justice—he loaded two pistols so that neither could go off. He has got a pass-key, and goes in and out of the 'Swan' at all hours. He provided counsel for Daniel Cox. That could only be through compunction.

"He swore in court that he slept that night at 13 Farringdon Street. Your lordship will find it on your notes. For 'twas you put the question, and methinks Heaven inspired you. An hour after the trial I was at 13 Farringdon Street. No Cowen and no captain had

ever lodged there nor slept there. Present lodger, a City clerk; lodger at date of murder, and old clergyman that said he had a country cure, and got the simple body to trust him with a pass-key: so he came in and out at all hours of the night. This man was no clerk, but, as I believe, the cracksman that did the job at the 'Swan.'

"My lord, there is always two in a job of this sort—the professional man and the confederate. Cowen was the confederate, hocussed the wine, loaded the pistols, and lent his pass-key to the cracksman. The cracksman opened the other door with his tools, unless Cowen made him duplicate keys. Neither of them intended violence, or they would have used their own weapons. The wine was drugged expressly to make that needless. The cracksman, instead of a black mask, put on a calf-skin waistcoat and a bottle-nose, and that passed muster for Cox by moonlight; it puzzled Cox by moonlight, and deceived Gardiner by moonlight.

"For the love of God get me a respite for the innocent man, and I will undertake to bring the crime home to the cracksman and to his confederate Cowen."

Bradbury signed this with his name and quality.

The judge was not sorry to see the doubt his own wariness had raised so powerfully confirmed. He sent this missive on to the minister, with the remark that he had received a letter which ought not to have been sent to him, but to those in whose hands the prisoner's fate rested. He thought it his duty, however, to transcribe from his notes the question he had put to Captain Cowen, and his reply that he had slept at 13 Farringdon Street on the night of the murder, and also the substance of the prisoner's defense, with the remark that, as stated by that uneducated person, it had ap-

peared ridiculous; but that after studying this Bow Street officer's statements, and assuming them to be in the main correct, it did not appear ridiculous, but only remarkable, and it reconciled all the undisputed facts, whereas that Cox was the murderer was and ever must remain irreconcilable with the position of the knife and the track of the blood.

Bradbury's letter and the above comment found their way to the King, and he granted what was asked—a respite.

Bradbury and his fellows went to work to find the old clergyman, alias cracksman. But he had melted away without a trace, and they got no other clew. But during Cowen's absence they got a traveler, i. e., a disguised agent, into the inn, who found relics of wax in the key-holes of Cowen's outer door and of the door of communication.

Bradbury sent this information in two letters, one to the judge, and one to the minister.

But this did not advance him much. He had long been sure that Cowen was in it. It was the professional hand, the actual robber and murderer, he wanted.

The days succeeded one another: nothing was done. He lamented, too late, he had not applied for a reprieve, or even a pardon. He deplored his own presumption in assuming that he could unravel such a mystery entirely. His busy brain schemed night and day; he lost his sleep, and even his appetite. At last, in sheer despair, he proposed to himself a new solution, and acted upon it in the dark and with consummate subtlety; for he said to himself: "I am in deeper water than I thought. Lord, how they skim a case at the Old Bailey! They take a pond for a puddle, and go to fathom it with a forefinger."

Captain Cowen sank into a settled gloom; but he no longer courted solitude; it gave him the horrors. He preferred to be in company, tho he no longer shone in it. He made acquaintance with his neighbor, and rather liked him. The man had been in the Commissariat Department, and seemed half surprized at the honor a captain did him in conversing with him. But he was well versed in all the incidents of the late wars, and Cowen was glad to go with him into the past; for the present was dead, and the future horrible.

This Mr. Cutler, so deferential when sober, was inclined to be more familiar when in his cups, and that generally ended in his singing and talking to himself in his own room in the absurdest way. He never went out without a black leather case strapped across his back like a dispatch-box. When joked and asked as to the contents, he used to say, "Papers, papers," curtly.

One evening, being rather the worse for liquor, he dropped it, and there was a metallic sound. This was immediately commented on by the wags of the company.

"That fell heavy for paper," said one.

"And there was a ring," said another.

"Come, unload thy pack, comrade, and show us thy papers."

Cutler was sobered in a moment, and looked scared. Cowen observed this, and quietly left the room. He went up-stairs to his own room, and, mounting on a chair, he found a thin place in the partition and made an eyelet-hole.

That very night he made use of this with good effect. Cutler came up to bed, singing and whistling, but presently threw down something heavy, and was

silent. Cowen spied, and saw him kneel down, draw from his bosom a key suspended round his neck by a ribbon, and open the dispatch-box. There were papers in it, but only to deaden the sound of a great many new guineas that glittered in the light of the candle, and seemed to fire and fill the receptacle.

Cutler looked furtively round, plunged his hands in them, took them out by handfuls, admired them, kissed them, and seemed to worship them, locked them up again, and put the black case under his pillow.

While they were glaring in the light, Cowen's eyes flashed with unholy fire. He clutched his hands at them where he stood, but they were inaccessible. He sat down despondent, and cursed the injustice of fate. Bubbled out of money in the City; robbed on the road; but when another had money, it was safe; he left his keys in the locks of both doors, and his gold never quitted him.

Not long after this discovery he got a letter from his son, telling him that the college bill for battels, or commons, had come in, and he was unable to pay it; he begged his father to disburse it, or he should lose credit.

This tormented the unhappy father, and the proximity of gold tantalized him so that he bought a phial of laudanum and secreted it about his person.

"Better die," said he, "and leave my boy to Barrington. Such a legacy from his dead comrade will be sacred, and he has the world at his feet."

He even ordered a bottle of red port and kept it by him to swill the laudanum in, and so get drunk and die.

But when it came to the point he faltered.

Meantime the day drew near for the execution of Daniel Cox. Bradbury had undertaken too much; his

cracksman seemed to the King's advisers as shadowy as the double of Daniel Cox.

The evening before that fatal day Cowen came to a wild resolution; he would go to Tyburn at noon, which was the hour fixed, and would die under that man's gibbet—so was this powerful mind unhinged.

This desperate idea was uppermost in his mind when he went up to his bedroom.

But he resisted. No, he would never play the coward while there was a chance left on the cords; while there is life there is hope. He seized the bottle, uncorked it, and tossed off a glass. It was potent and tingled through his veins and warmed his heart.

He set the bottle down before him. He filled another glass; but before he put it to his lips jocund noises were heard coming up the stairs, and noisy, drunken voices, and two boon companions of his neighbor Cutler—who had a double-bedded room opposite him—parted with him for the night. He was not drunk enough, it seems, for he kept demanding "t'other bottle." His friends, however, were of a different opinion; they bundled him into his room and locked him in from the other side, and shortly after burst into their own room, and were more garrulous than articulate.

Cutler, thus disposed of, kept saying and shouting and whining that he must have "t'other bottle." In short, any one at a distance would have thought he was announcing sixteen different propositions, so various were the accents of anger, grief, expostulation, deprecation, supplication, imprecation, and whining tenderness in which he declared he must have "t'other bo'l."

At last he came bump against the door of communi-

cation. "Neighbor," said he, "your wuship, I mean, great man of war."

"Well, sir?"

"Let's have t'other bo'l."

Cowen's eyes flashed; he took out his phial of laudanum and emptied about a fifth part of it into the bottle. Cutler whined at the door, "Do open the door, your wuship, and let's have t'other (hic)."

"Why, the key is on your side."

A feeble-minded laugh at the discovery, a fumbling with the key, and the door opened, and Cutler stood in the doorway, with his cravat disgracefully loose and his visage wreathed in foolish smiles. His eyes goggled; he pointed with a mixture of surprise and low cunning at the table. "Why, there is t'other bo'l! Let's have'm."

"Nay," said Cowen, "I drain no bottles at this time; one glass suffices me. I drink your health." He raised his glass.

Cutler grabbed the bottle and said, brutally, "And I'll drink yours!" and shut the door with a slam, but was too intent on his prize to lock it.

Cowen sat and listened.

He heard the wine gurgle, and the drunkard draw a long breath of delight.

Then there was a pause; then a snatch of song, rather melodious and more articulate than Mr. Cutler's recent attempts at discourse.

Then another gurgle and another loud "Ah!"

Then a vocal attempt, which broke down by degrees.

Then a snore.

Then a somnolent remark—"All right!"

Then a staggering on to his feet. Then a swaying to and fro, and a subsiding against the door.

Then by and by a little reel at the bed and a fall flat on the floor.

Then stertorous breathing.

Cowen sat still at the keyhole some time, then took off his boots and softly mounted his chair, and applied his eye to the peep-hole.

Cutler was lying on his stomach between the table and the bed.

Cowen came to the door on tiptoe and turned the handle gently; the door yielded.

He lost nerve for the first time in his life. What horrible shame, should the man come to his senses and see him!

He stepped back into his own room, ripped up his portmanteau, and took out, from between the leather and the lining, a disguise and a mask. He put them on.

Then he took his loaded cane; for he thought to himself, "No more stabbing in that room," and he crept through the door like a cat.

The man lay breathing stertorously, and his lips blowing out at every exhalation like lifeless lips urged by a strong wind, so that Cowen began to fear, not that he might wake, but that he might die.

It flashed across him he should have to leave England.

What he came to do seemed now wonderfully easy; he took the key by its ribbon carefully off the sleeper's neck, unlocked the dispatch-box, took off his hat, put the gold into it, locked the dispatch-box, replaced the key, took up his hatful of money, and retired slowly on tiptoe as he came.

He had but deposited his stick and the booty on the bed, when the sham drunkard pinned him from behind, and uttered a shrill whistle. With a fierce snarl Cowen

whirled his captor round like a feather, and dashed with him against the post of his own door, stunning the man so that he relaxed his hold, and Cowen whirled him round again, and kicked him in the stomach so felly that he was doubled up out of the way, and contributed nothing more to the struggle except his last meal. At this very moment two Bow Street runners rushed madly upon Cowen through the door of communication. He met one in full career with a blow so tremendous that it sounded through the house, and drove him all across the room against the window, where he fell down senseless; the other he struck rather short, and tho the blood spurted and the man staggered, he was on him again in a moment, and pinned him. Cowen, a master of pugilism, got his head under his left shoulder, and pommelled him cruelly; but the fellow managed to hold on, till a powerful foot kicked in the door at a blow, and Bradbury himself sprang on Captain Cowen with all the fury of a tiger; he seized him by the throat from behind, and throttled him, and set his knee to his back; the other, tho mauled and bleeding, whipped out a short rope, and pinioned him in a turn of the hand. Then all stood panting but the disabled men, and once more the passage and the room were filled with pale faces and panting bosoms.

Lights flashed on the scene, and instantly loud screams from the landlady and her maids, and as they screamed they pointed with trembling fingers.

And well they might. There—caught red-handed in an act of robbery and violence, a few steps from the place of the mysterious murder, stood the stately figure of Captain Cowen and the mottled face and bottle nose

of Daniel Cox condemned to die in just twelve hours' time.

Chapter IV

"Ay, scream, ye fools," roared Bradbury, "that couldn't see a church by daylight." Then, shaking his fist at Cowen, "Thou villain! 'Tisn't one man you have murdered, 'tis two. But please God I'll save one of them yet, and hang you in his place. Way, there! not a moment to lose."

In another minute they were all in the yard, and a hackney-coach sent for.

Captain Cowen said to Bradbury, "This thing on my face is choking me."

"Oh, better than you have been choked—at Tyburn and all."

"Hang me. Don't pillory me. I've served my country."

Bradbury removed the wax mask. He said afterward he had no power to refuse the villain, he was so grand and gentle.

"Thank you, sir. Now, what can I do for you? Save Daniel Cox?"

"Ay, do that, and I'll forgive you."

"Give me a sheet of paper."

Bradbury, impressed by the man's tone of sincerity, took him into the bar, and getting all his men round him, placed paper and ink before him.

He addressed to General Barrington, in attendance on His Majesty, these:—

General,—See His Majesty betimes, tell him from me that Daniel Cox, condemned to die at noon, is

innocent, and get him a reprieve. O Barrington, come to your lost comrade. The bearer will tell you where I am. I cannot.

EDWARD COWEN.

"Send a man you can trust to Windsor with that, and take me to my most welcome death."

A trusty officer was dispatched to Windsor and in about an hour Cowen was lodged in Newgate.

All that night Bradbury labored to save the man that was condemned to die. He knocked up the sheriff of Middlesex, and told him all.

"Don't come to me," said the sheriff; "go to the minister."

He rode to the minister's house. The minister was up. His wife gave a ball—windows blazing, shadows dancing—music—lights. Night turned into day. Bradbury knocked. The door flew open, and revealed a line of bedizened footmen, dotted at intervals up the stairs.

"I must see my lord. Life or death. I'm an officer from Bow Street."

"You can't see my lord. He is entertaining the Proosian Ambassador and his sweet."

"I must see him, or an innocent man will die to-morrow. Tell him so. Here's a guinea."

"Is there? Step aside here."

He waited in torments till the message went through the gamut of lackeys, and got, more or less mutilated, to the minister.

He detached a buffer, who proposed to Mr. Bradbury to call at the Do-little office in Westminster next morning.

"No," said Bradbury. "I don't leave the house till

I see him. Innocent blood shall not be spilled for want of a word in time."

The buffer retired, and in came a duffer who said the occasion was not convenient.

"Ay, but it is," said Bradbury, "and if my lord is not here in five minutes, I'll go up-stairs and tell my tale before them all, and see if they are all hair-dressers' dummies, without heart or conscience or sense."

In five minutes in came a gentleman, with an order on his breast, and said, "You are a Bow Street officer?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Name?"

"Bradbury."

"You say the man condemned to die to-morrow is innocent?"

"Yes, my lord."

"How do you know?"

"Just taken the real culprit."

"When is the other to suffer?"

"Twelve to-morrow."

"Seems short time. Humph! Will you be good enough to take a line to the sheriff? Formal message to-morrow." The actual message ran:—

"Delay execution of Cox till we hear from Windsor. Bearer will give reasons."

With this Bradbury hurried away, not to the sheriff, but to the prison; and infected the jailer and the chaplain and all the turnkeys with pity for the condemned, and the spirit of delay.

Bradbury breakfasted, and washed his face, and off to the sheriff. Sheriff was gone out. Bradbury hunted him from pillar to post, and could find him nowhere.

He was at last obliged to go and wait for him at Newgate.

He arrived at the stroke of twelve to superintend the execution. Bradbury put the minister's note into his hand.

"This is no use," said he. "I want an order from His Majesty, or the Privy Council at least."

"Not to delay," suggested the chaplain. "You have all the day for it."

"All the day! I can't be all the day hanging a single man. My time is precious, gentlemen." Then, his bark being worse than his bite, he said, "I shall come again at four o'clock, and then, if there is no news from Windsor, the law must take its course."

He never came again, tho, for, even as he turned his back to retire, there was a faint cry from the farthest part of the crowd, a paper raised on a hussar's lance, and as the mob fell back on every side, a royal aide-de-camp rode up, followed closely by the mounted runner, and delivered to the sheriff a reprieve under the sign-manual of His Majesty George the First.

At 2 P. M. of the same day Gen. Sir Robert Barrington reached Newgate, and saw Captain Cowen in private. That unhappy man fell on his knees and made a confession.

Barrington was horrified, and turned as cold as ice to him. He stood erect as a statue. "A soldier to rob!" said he. "Murder was bad enough—but to rob!"

Cowen, with his head and hands all hanging down, could only say, faintly, "I have been robbed and ruined, and it was for my boy. Ah, me! what will become of him? I have lost my soul for him, and now he will be ruined and disgraced—by me, who would

have died for him." The strong man shook with agony, and his head and hands almost touched the ground.

Sir Robert Barrington looked at him and pondered.

"No," said he, relenting a little, "that is the one thing I can do for you. I had made up my mind to take your son to Canada as my secretary, and I will take him. But he must change his name. I sail next Thursday."

The broken man stared wildly; then started up and blessed him; and from that moment the wild hope entered his breast that he might keep his son unstained by his crime, and even ignorant of it.

Barrington said that was impossible; but yielded to the father's prayers, and consented to act as if it was possible. He would send a messenger to Oxford, with money and instructions to bring the young man up and put him on board the ship at Gravesend.

This difficult scheme once conceived, there was not a moment to be lost. Barrington sent down a mounted messenger to Oxford, with money and instructions.

Cowen sent for Bradbury, and asked him when he was to appear at Bow Street.

"To-morrow, I suppose."

"Do me a favor. Get all your witnesses; make the case complete, and show me only once to the public before I am tried."

"Well, Captain," said Bradbury, "you were square with me about poor Cox. I don't see as it matters much to you; but I'll not say you nay." He saw the solicitor for the Crown, and asked a few days to collect all his evidence. The functionary named Friday.

This was conveyed next day to Cowen, and put him in a fever; it gave him a chance of keeping his son ignorant, but no certainty. Ships were eternally de-

tained at Gravesend waiting for a wind; there were no steam-tugs then to draw them into blue water. Even going down the Channel, letters boarded them if the wind slacked. He walked his room to and fro, like a caged tiger, day and night.

Wednesday evening Barrington came with the news that his son was at the "Star" in Cornhill. "I have got him to bed," said he, "and, Lord forgive me, I have let him think he will see you before we go down to Gravesend to-morrow."

"Then let me see him," said the miserable father. "He shall know nought from me."

They applied to the jailer, and urged that he could be a prisoner all the time, surrounded by constables in disguise. No; the jailer would not risk his place and indictment. Bradbury was sent for, and made light of the responsibility. "I brought him here," said he, "and I will take him to the 'Star,' I and my fellows. Indeed, he will give us no trouble this time. Why, that would blow the gaff, and make the young gentleman fly to the whole thing."

"It can only be done by authority," was the jailer's reply.

"Then by authority it shall be done," said Sir Robert. "Mr. Bradbury, have three men here with a coach at one o'clock, and regiment, if you like, to watch the 'Star.' "

Punctually at one came Barrington with an authority. It was a request from the Queen. The jailer took it respectfully. It was an authority not worth a button; but he knew he could not lose his place, with this writing to brandish at need.

The father and son dined with the General at the

"Star." Bradbury and one of his fellows waited as private servants; other officers, in plain clothes, watched back and front.

At three o'clock father and son parted, the son with many tears, the father with dry eyes, but a voice that trembled as he blessed him.

Young Cowen, now Morris, went down to Gravesend with his chief; the criminal back to Newgate, respectfully bowed from the door of the "Star" by landlord and waiters.

At first he was comparatively calm, but as the night advanced became restless, and by and by began to pace his cell again like a caged lion.

At twenty minutes past eleven a turnkey brought him a line; a horseman had galloped in with it from Gravesend.

"A fair wind—we weigh anchor at the full tide. It is a merchant vessel, and the Captain under my orders to keep off shore and take no messages. Farewell. Turn to the God you have forgotten. He alone can pardon you."

On receiving this note, Cowen betook him to his knees.

In this attitude the jailer found him when he went his round.

He waited till the Captain rose, and then let him know that an able lawyer was in waiting, instructed to defend him at Bow Street next morning. The truth is, the females of the "Swan" had clubbed money for this purpose.

Cowen declined to see him. "I thank you, sir," said he, "I will defend myself."

He said, however, he had a little favor to ask.

"I have been," said he, "of late much agitated and fatigued, and a sore trial awaits me in the morning. A few hours of unbroken sleep would be a boon to me."

"The turnkeys must come in to see you are all right."

"It is their duty; but I will lie in sight of the door if they will be good enough not to wake me."

"There can be no objection to that, Captain, and I am glad to see you calmer."

"Thank you; never calmer in my life."

He got his pillow, set two chairs, and composed himself to sleep. He put the candle on the table, that the turnkeys might peep through the door and see him.

Once or twice they peeped in very softly, and saw him sleeping in the full light of the candle, to moderate which, apparently, he had thrown a white handkerchief over his face.

At nine in the morning they brought him his breakfast, as he must be at Bow Street between ten and eleven.

When they came so near him, it struck them he lay too still.

They took off the handkerchief.

He had been dead some hours.

Yes, there, calm, grave, and noble, incapable, as it seemed either of the passions that had destroyed him or the tender affection which redeemed yet inspired his crimes, lay the corpse of Edward Cowen.

Thus miserably perished a man in whom were many elements of greatness.

He left what little money he had to Bradbury, in a note imploring him to keep particulars out of the journals, for his son's sake; and such was the in-

fluence on Bradbury of the scene at the "Star," the man's dead face, and his dying words, that, tho public detail was his interest, nothing transpired but that the gentleman who had been arrested on suspicion of being concerned in the murder at the "Swan" Inn had committed suicide: to which was added by another hand: "Cox, however, has the King's pardon, and the affair still remains shrouded with mystery."

Cox was permitted to see the body of Cowen, and, whether the features had gone back to youth, or his own brain, long sobered in earnest, had enlightened his memory, recognized him as a man he had seen committed for horsestealing at Ipswich, when he himself was the mayor's groom; but some girl lent the accused a file, and he cut his way out of the cage.

Cox's calamity was his greatest blessing. He went into Newgate scarcely knowing there was a God; he came out thoroughly enlightened in that respect by the teaching of the chaplain and the death of Cowen. He went in a drunkard; the noose that dangled over his head so long terrified him into life-long sobriety—for he laid all the blame on liquor—and he came out as bitter a foe to drink as drink had been to him.

His case excited sympathy; a considerable sum was subscribed to set him up in trade. He became a horse-dealer on a small scale: but he was really a most excellent judge of horses, and, being sober, enlarged his business; horsed a coach or two; attended fairs, and eventually made a fortune by dealing in cavalry horses under government contracts.

As his money increased, his nose diminished, and when he died, old and regretted, only a pink tinge revealed the habits of his earlier life.

Mrs. Martha Cust and Barbara Lamb were no longer sure, but they doubted to their dying day the innocence of the ugly fellow, and the guilt of the handsome, civil-spoken gentleman.

But they converted nobody to their opinion; for they gave their reasons.

SILENCE

By Leonid Andreiev

One moonlit night in May, while the nightingales sang, Father Ignatius' wife entered his chamber. Her countenance expressed suffering, and the little lamp she held in her hand trembled. Approaching her husband, she touched his shoulder, and managed to say between her sobs:

"Father, let us go to Verochka."

Without turning his head, Father Ignatius glanced severely at his wife over the rims of his spectacles, and looked long and intently, till she waved her unoccupied hand and dropped on a low divan.

"That one toward the other be so pitiless!" she pronounced slowly, with emphasis on the final syllables, and her good plump face was distorted with a grimace of pain and exasperation, as if in this manner she wished to express what stern people they were—her husband and daughter.

Father Ignatius smiled and arose. Closing his book, he removed his spectacles, placed them in the case and meditated. His long, black beard, inwoven with silver threads, lay dignified on his breast, and it slowly heaved at every deep breath.

"Well, let us go!" said he.

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Olga Stepanovna quickly arose and entreated in an appealing, timid voice:

"Only don't revile her, father! You know the sort she is."

Vera's chamber was in the attic, and the narrow, wooden stair bent and creaked under the heavy tread of Father Ignatius. Tall and ponderous, he lowered his head to avoid striking the floor of the upper story, and frowned disdainfully when the white jacket of his wife brushed his face. Well he knew that nothing would come of their talk with Vera.

"Why do you come?" asked Vera, raising a bared arm to her eyes. The other arm lay on top of a white summer blanket hardly distinguishable from the fabric, so white, translucent and cold was its aspect.

"Verochka!" began her mother, but sobbing, she grew silent.

"Vera!" said her father, making an effort to soften his dry and hard voice. "Vera, tell us, what troubles you?"

Vera was silent.

"Vera, do not we, your mother and I, deserve your confidence? Do we not love you? And is there someone nearer to you than we? Tell us about your sorrow, and believe me you'll feel better for it. And we too. Look at your aged mother, how much she suffers!"

"Verochka!"

"And I . . ." The dry voice trembled, truly something had broken in it. "And I . . . do you think I find it easy? As if I did not see that some sorrow is gnawing at you—and what is it? And I, your father, do not know what it is. Is it right that it should be so?"

Vera was silent. Father Ignatius very cautiously

stroked his beard, as if afraid that his fingers would enmesh themselves involuntarily in it, and continued:

"Against my wish you went to St. Petersburg—did I pronounce a curse upon you, you who disobeyed me? Or did I not give you money? Or, you'll say, I have not been kind? Well, why then are you silent? There, you've had your St. Petersburg!"

Father Ignatius became silent, and an image arose before him of something huge, of granite, and terrible, full of invisible dangers and strange and indifferent people. And there, alone and weak, was his Vera and there they had lost her. An awful hatred against that terrible and mysterious city grew in the soul of Father Ignatius, and an anger against his daughter who was silent, obstinately silent.

"St. Petersburg has nothing to do with it," said Vera, morosely, and closed her eyes. "And nothing is the matter with me. Better go to bed, it is late."

"Verochka," whimpered her mother. "Little daughter, do confess to me."

"Akh, mama!" impatiently Vera interrupted her.

Father Ignatius sat down on a chair and laughed.

"Well, then it's nothing?" he inquired, ironically.

"Father," sharply put in Vera, raising herself from the pillow, "you know that I love you and mother. Well, I do feel a little weary. But that will pass. Do go to sleep, and I also wish to sleep. And to-morrow, or some other time, we'll have a chat."

Father Ignatius impetuously arose so that the chair hit the wall, and took his wife's hand.

"Let us go."

"Verochka!"

"Let us go, I tell you!" shouted Father Ignatius. "If she has forgotten God, shall we . . ."

Almost forcibly he led Olga Stepanovna out of the room, and when they descended the stairs, his wife, decreasing her gait, said in a harsh whisper:

"It was you, priest, who have made her such. From you she has learned her ways. And you'll answer for it. Akh, unhappy creature that I am!"

And she wept, and, as her eyes filled with tears, her foot, missing a step, would descend with a sudden jolt, as if she were eager to fall into some existent abyss below.

From that day Father Ignatius ceased to speak with his daughter, but she seemed not to notice it. As before she lay in her room, or walked about, continually wiping her eyes with the palms of her hands as if they contained some irritating foreign substance. And crushed between these two silent people, the jolly, fun-loving wife of the priest quailed and seemed lost, not knowing what to say or do.

Occasionally Vera took a stroll. A week following the interview she went out in the evening, as was her habit. She was not seen alive again, as on this evening she threw herself under the train, which cut her in two.

Father Ignatius himself directed the funeral. His wife was not present in church, as at the news of Vera's death she was prostrated by a stroke. She lost control of her feet, hands and tongue, and she lay motionless in the semi-darkened room when the church bells rang out. She heard the people, as they issued out of church and passed the house, intone the chants, and she made an effort to raise her hand, and to make a sign of the cross, but her hand refused to obey; she wished to say: "Farewell, Vera!" but the tongue lay in her mouth huge and heavy. And her attitude was

so calm, that it gave one an impression of restfulness or sleep. Only her eyes remained open.

At the funeral, in church, were many people who knew Father Ignatius, and many strangers, and all bewailed Vera's terrible death, and tried to find in the movements and voice of Father Ignatius tokens of a deep sorrow. They did not love Father Ignatius because of his severity and proud manners, his scorn of sinners, for his unforgiving spirit, his envy and covetousness, his habit of utilizing every opportunity to extort money from his parishioners. They all wished to see him suffer, to see his spirit broken, to see him conscious in his two-fold guilt for the death of his daughter—as a cruel father and a bad priest—incapable of preserving his own flesh from sin. They cast searching glances at him, and he, feeling these glances directed toward his back, made efforts to hold erect its broad and strong expanse, and his thoughts were not concerning his dead daughter, but concerning his own dignity.

"A hardened priest!" said, with a shake of his head, Karzenoff, a carpenter, to whom Father Ignatius owed five rubles for frames.

And thus, hard and erect, Father Ignatius reached the burial ground, and in the same manner he returned. Only at the door of his wife's chamber did his spine relax a little, but this may have been due to the fact the height of the door was inadequate to admit his tall figure. The change from broad daylight made it difficult for him to distinguish the face of his wife, but, after scrutiny, he was astonished at its calmness and because the eyes showed no tears. And there was neither anger, nor sorrow in the eyes—they were dumb, and they kept silent with difficulty, reluctantly,

as did the entire plump and helpless body, pressing against the feather bedding.

"Well, how do you feel?" inquired Father Ignatius.

The lips, however, were dumb; the eyes also were silent. Father Ignatius laid his hand on her forehead; it was cold and moist, and Olga Stepanovna did not show in any way that she had felt the hand's contact. When Father Ignatius removed his hand there gazed at him, immobile, two deep gray eyes, seeming almost entirely dark from the dilated pupils, and there was neither sadness in them, nor anger.

"I am going into my own room," said Father Ignatius, who began to feel cold and terror.

He passed through the drawing-room, where everything appeared neat and in order, as usual, and where, attired in white covers, stood tall chairs, like corpses in their shrouds. Over one window hung an empty wire cage, with the door open.

"Nastasya!" shouted Father Ignatius, and his voice seemed to him coarse, and he felt ill at ease because he raised his voice so high in these silent rooms, so soon after his daughter's funeral. "Nastasya!" he called out in a lower tone of voice, "Where is the canary?"

"She flew away, to be sure."

"Why did you let it out?"

Nastasya began to weep, and wiping her face with the edges of her calico handkerchief, said through her tears:

"It was my young mistress's soul. Was it right to hold it?"

And it seemed to Father Ignatius that the yellow, happy little canary, always singing with inclined head, was really the soul of Vera, and if it had not flown away it wouldn't have been possible to say that Vera

had died. He became even more incensed at the maid-servant, and shouted:

"Off with you!"

And when Nastasya did not find the door at once he added:

"Fool!"

From the day of the funeral silence reigned in the little house. It was not stillness, for stillness is merely the absence of sounds; it was silence, because it seemed that they who were silent could say something but would not. So thought Father Ignatius each time he entered his wife's chamber and met that obstinate gaze, so heavy in its aspect that it seemed to transform the very air into lead, which bore down one's head and spine. So thought he, examining his daughter's music sheets, which bore imprints of her voice, as well as her books and her portrait, which she brought with her from St. Petersburg. Father Ignatius was accustomed to scrutinize the portrait in established order: First, he would gaze on the cheek upon which a strong light was thrown by the painter; in his fancy he would see upon it a slight wound, which he had noticed on Vera's cheek in death, and the source of which he could not understand. Each time he would meditate upon causes; he reasoned that if it was made by the train the entire head would have been crushed, whereas the head of Vera remained wholly untouched. It was possible that someone did it with his foot when the corpse was removed, or accidentally with a finger nail.

To contemplate at length upon the details of Vera's death taxed the strength of Father Ignatius, so that he would pass on to the eyes. These were dark, hand-

some, with long lashes, which cast deep shadows beneath, causing the whites to seem particularly luminous, both eyes appearing to be inclosed in black, mourning frames. A strange expression was given them by the unknown but talented artist; it seemed as if in the space between the eyes and the object upon which they gazed there lay a thin, transparent film. It resembled somewhat the effect obtained by an imperceptible layer of dust on the black top of a piano, softening the shine of polished wood. And no matter how Father Ignatius placed the portrait, the eyes insistently followed him, but there was no speech in them, only silence; and this silence was so clear that it seemed it could be heard. And gradually Father Ignatius began to think that he heard silence.

Every morning after breakfast Father Ignatius would enter the drawing-room, throw a rapid glance at the empty cage and the other familiar objects, and seating himself in the armchair would close his eyes and listen to the silence of the house. There was something grotesque about this. The cage kept silence, stilly and tenderly, and in this silence were felt sorrow and tears, and distant dead laughter. The silence of his wife, softened by the walls, continued insistent, heavy as lead, and terrible, so terrible that on the hottest day Father Ignatius would be seized by cold shivers. Continuous and cold as the grave, and mysterious as death, was the silence of his daughter. The silence itself seemed to share this suffering and struggled, as it were, with the terrible desire to pass into speech; however, something strong and cumbersome, as a machine, held it motionless and stretched it out as a wire. And somewhere at the distant end, the wire would begin to agitate and resound subduedly,

feebly and plaintively. With joy, yet with terror, Father Ignatius would seize upon this engendered sound, and resting with his arms upon the arms of the chair, would lean his head forward, awaiting the sound to reach him. But the sound would break and pass into silence.

"How stupid!" muttered Father Ignatius, angrily, arising from the chair, still erect and tall. Through the window he saw, suffused with sunlight, the street, which was paved with round, even-sized stones, and directly across, the stone wall of a long, windowless shed. On the corner stood a cab-driver, resembling a clay statue, and it was difficult to understand why he stood there, when for hours there was not a single passer-by.

Father Ignatius had occasion for considerable speech outside his house. There was talking to be done with the clergy, with the members of his flock, while officiating at ceremonies, sometimes with acquaintances at social evenings; yet, upon his return he would feel invariably that the entire day he had been silent. This was due to the fact that with none of those people could he talk upon that matter which concerned him most, and upon which he would contemplate each night: Why did Vera die?

Father Ignatius did not seem to understand that now this could not be known, and still thought it was possible to know. Each night—all his nights had become sleepless—he would picture that minute when he and his wife, in dead midnight, stood near Vera's bed, and he entreated her: "Tell us!" And when in his recollection, he would reach these words, the rest appeared to him not as it was in reality. His closed

eyes, preserving in their darkness a live and undimmed picture of that night, saw how Vera raised herself in her bed, smiled and tried to say something. And what was that she tried to say? That unuttered word of Vera's, which should have solved all, seemed so near, that if one only had bent his ear and suppressed the beats of his heart, one could have heard it, and at the same time it was so infinitely, so hopelessly distant. Father Ignatius would arise from his bed, stretch forth his joined hands and, wringing them, would exclaim:

"Vera!"

And he would be answered by silence.

One evening Father Ignatius entered the chamber of Olga Stepanovna, whom he had not come to see for a week, seated himself at her head, and turning away from that insistent, heavy gaze, said:

"Mother! I wish to talk to you about Vera. Do you hear?"

Her eyes were silent, and Father Ignatius raising his voice, spoke sternly and powerfully, as he was accustomed to speak with penitents:

"I am aware that you are under the impression that I have been the cause of Vera's death. Reflect, however, did I love her less than you loved her? You reason absurdly. I have been stern; did that prevent her from doing as she wished? I have forfeited the dignity of a father, I humbly bent my neck, when she defied my malediction and departed—hence. And you —did you not entreat her to remain, until I commanded you to be silent? Did I beget cruelty in her? Did I not teach her about God, about humility, about love?"

Father Ignatius quickly glanced into the eyes of his wife, and turned away.

"What was there for me to do when she did not wish to reveal her sorrow? Did I not command her? Did I not entreat her? I suppose, in your opinion, I should have dropped on my knees before the maid, and cried like an old woman! How should I know what was going on in her head! Cruel, heartless daughter!"

Father Ignatius hit his knees with his fist.

"There was no love in her—that's what! As far as I'm concerned, that's settled, of course—I'm a tyrant! Perhaps she loved you—you, who wept and humbled yourself?"

Father Ignatius gave a hollow laugh.

"There's love for you! And as a solace for you, what a death she chose! A cruel, ignominious death. She died in the dust, in the dirt—as a d-dog who is kicked in the jaw."

The voice of Father Ignatius sounded low and hoarse:

"I feel ashamed! Ashamed to go out in the street! Ashamed before the altar! Ashamed before God! Cruel, undeserving daughter! Accurst in thy grave!"

When Father Ignatius glanced at his wife she was unconscious, and revived only after several hours. When she regained consciousness her eyes were silent, and it was impossible to tell whether or not she remembered what Father Ignatius had said.

That very night—it was a moonlit, calm, warm and deathly still night in May—Father Ignatius, proceeding on his tiptoes, so as not to be overheard by his wife and the sick-nurse, climbed up the stairs and entered Vera's room. The window in the attic had remained

closed since the death of Vera, and the atmosphere was dry and warm, with a light odor of burning that comes from heat generated during the day in the iron roof. The air of lifelessness and abandonment permeated the apartment, which for a long time had remained unvisited, and where the timber of the walls, the furniture and other objects gave forth a slight odor of continued putrescence. A bright streak of moonlight fell on the window-sill, and on the floor, and, reflected by the white, carefully washed boards, cast a dim light into the room's corners, while the white, clean bed, with two pillows, one large and one small, seemed phantom-like and aerial. Father Ignatius opened the window, causing to pour into the room a considerable current of fresh air, smelling of dust, of the nearby river and the blooming linden. An indistinct sound as of voices in chorus also entered occasionally; evidently young people rowed and sang.

Quietly treading with naked feet, resembling a white fantom, Father Ignatius made his way to the vacant bed, bent his knees and fell face down on the pillows, embracing them—on that spot where should have been Vera's face. Long he lay thus; the song grew louder, then died out; but he still lay there, while his long, black hair spread over his shoulders and the bed.

The moon had changed its position, and the room grew darker, when Father Ignatius raised his head and murmured, putting into his voice the entire strength of his long-suppressed and unconscious love and hearkening to his own words, as if it were not he who was listening, but Vera.

"Vera, daughter mine! Do you understand what you are to me, daughter? Little daughter! My heart, my

blood and my life. Your father—your old father—is already gray, and also feeble."

The shoulders of Father Ignatius shook and the entire burdened figure became agitated. Suppressing his agitation, Father Ignatius murmured tenderly, as to an infant:

"Your old father entreats you. No, little Vera, he supplicates. He weeps. He never has wept before. Your sorrow, little child, your sufferings—they are also mine. Greater than mine."

Father Ignatius shook his head.

"Greater, Verochka. What is death to an old man like me? But you—if you only knew how delicate and weak and timid you are! Do you recall how you bruised your finger once and the blood trickled and you cried a little. My child! I know that you love me, love me intensely. Every morning you kiss my hand. Tell me, do tell me, what grief troubles your little head, and I—with these hands—shall smother your grief. They are still strong, Vera, these hands."

The hair of Father Ignatius shook.

"Tell me!"

Father Ignatius fixed his eyes on the wall, and wrung his hands.

"Tell me!"

Stillness prevailed in the room, and from afar was heard the prolonged and broken whistle of a locomotive.

Father Ignatius, gazing out of his dilated eyes, as if there had arisen suddenly before him the frightful fantom of the mutilated corpse, slowly raised himself from his knees, and with a credulous motion reached for his head with his hand, with spread and tensely

stiffened fingers. Making a step toward the door, Father Ignatius whispered brokenly:

"Tell me!"

And he was answered by silence.

The next day, after an early and lonely dinner, Father Ignatius went to the graveyard, the first time since his daughter's death. It was warm, deserted and still; it seemed more like an illumined night. Following habit, Father Ignatius, with effort, straightened his spine, looked severely about him and thought that he was the same as formerly; he was conscious neither of the new, terrible weakness in his legs, nor that his long beard had become entirely white as if a hard frost had hit it. The road to the graveyard led through a long, direct street, slightly on an upward incline, and at its termination loomed the arch of the graveyard gate, resembling a dark, perpetually open mouth, edged with glistening teeth.

Vera's grave was situated in the depth of the grounds, where the sandy little pathways terminated, and Father Ignatius, for a considerable time, was obliged to blunder along the narrow footpaths, which led in a broken line between green mounds, by all forgotten and abandoned. Here and there appeared, green with age, sloping tombstones, broken railings and large, heavy stones planted in the ground, and seemingly crushing it with some cruel, ancient spite. Near one such stone was the grave of Vera. It was covered with fresh turf, turned yellow; around, however, all was in bloom Ash embraced maple tree; and the widely spread hazel bush stretched out over the grave its bending branches with their downy, shaggy foliage. Sitting down on a neighboring grave and catching his breath, Father

Ignatius looked around him, throwing a glance upon the cloudless, desert sky, where in complete immovability, hung the glowing sun disk—and here he only felt that deep, incomparable stillness which reigns in graveyards, when the wind is absent and the slumbering foliage has ceased its rustling. And anew the thought came to Father Ignatius that this was not a stillness but a silence. It extended to the very brick walls of the graveyard, crept over them and occupied the city. And it terminated only—in those gray, obstinate and reluctantly silent eyes.

Father Ignatius' shoulders shivered, and he lowered his eyes upon the grave of Vera. He gazed long upon the little tufts of grass uprooted together with the earth from some open, wind-swept field and not successful in adapting themselves to a strange soil; he could not imagine that there, under this grass, only a few feet from him, lay Vera. And this nearness seemed incomprehensible and brought confusion into the soul and a strange agitation. She, of whom Father Ignatius was accustomed to think as of one passed away forever into the dark depths of eternity, was here, close by—and it was hard to understand that she, nevertheless, was no more and never again would be. And in the mind's fancy of Father Ignatius it seemed that if he could only utter some word, which was almost upon his lips, or if he could make some sort of movement, Vera would issue forth from her grave and arise to the same height and beauty that was once hers. And not alone would she arise, but all corpses. intensely sensitive in their solemnly cold silence.

Father Ignatius removed his wide-brimmed black hat, smoothed down his disarranged hair and whispered:

"Vera!"

Father Ignatius felt ill at ease, fearing to be overheard by a stranger, and stepping on the grave he gazed around him. No one was present, and this time he repeated loudly:

"Vera!"

It was the voice of an aged man, sharp and demanding, and it was strange that a so-powerfully expressed desire should remain without answer.

"Vera!"

Loudly and insistently the voice called, and when it relapsed into silence, it seemed for a moment that somewhere from underneath came an incoherent answer. And Father Igantius, clearing his ear of his long hair, pressed it to the rough, prickly turf.

"Vera, tell me!"

With terror, Father Ignatius felt pouring into his ear something cold as of the grave, which froze his marrow; Vera seemed to be speaking—speaking, however, with the same unbroken silence. This feeling became more racking and terrible, and when Father Ignatius forced himself finally to tear away his head, his face was pale as that of a corpse, and he fancied that the entire atmosphere trembled and palpitated from a resounding silence, and that this terrible sea was being swept by a wild hurricane. The silence strangled him; with icy waves it rolled through his head and agitated the hair; it smote against his breast, which groaned under the blows. Trembling from head to foot, casting around him sharp and sudden glances, Father Ignatius slowly raised himself and with a prolonged and tortuous effort attempted to straighten his spine and to give proud dignity to his trembling body. He succeeded in this. With measured protractiveness,

Father Ignatius shook the dirt from his knees, put on his hat, made the sign of the cross three times over the grave, and walked away with an even and firm gait, not recognizing, however, the familiar burial ground and losing his way.

"Well, here I've gone astray!" smiled Father Ignatius, halting at the branching of the footpaths.

He stood there for a moment, and, unreflecting, turned to the left, because it was impossible to stand and to wait. The silence drove him on. It arose from the green graves; it was the breath issuing from the gray, melancholy crosses; in thin, stifling currents it came from all pores of the earth, satiated with the dead. Father Ignatius increased his stride. Dizzy, he circled the same paths, jumped over the graves, stumbled across railings, clutching with his hands the prickly, metallic garlands, and turning the soft material of his dress into tatters. His sole thought was to escape. He fled from one place to another, and finally broke into a dead run, seemingly very tall and unusual in the flowing cassock, and his hair streaming in the wind. A corpse arisen form the grave could not have frightened a passer-by more than this wild figure of a man, running and leaping, and waving his arms, his face distorted and insane, and the open mouth breathing with a dull, hoarse sound. With one long leap, Father Ignatius landed on a little street, at one end of which appeared the small church, attached to the graveyard. At the entrance, on a low bench, dozed an old man, seemingly a distant pilgrim, and near him, assailing each other, were two quarreling old beggar women, filling the air with their oaths.

When Father Ignatius reached his home, it was already dusk, and there was light in Olga Stepanovna's

chamber. Not undressing and without removing his hat, dusty and tattered, Father Ignatius approached his wife and fell on his knees.

"Mother . . . Olga . . . have pity on me!" he wept. "I shall go mad."

He dashed his head against the edge of the table and he wept with anguish, as one who was weeping for the first time. Then he raised his head, confident that a miracle would come to pass, that his wife would speak and would pity him.

"My love!"

With his entire big body he drew himself toward his wife—and met the gaze of those gray eyes. There was neither compassion in them, nor anger. It was possible his wife had forgiven him, but in her eyes there was neither pity, nor anger. They were dumb and silent.

And silent was the entire dark, deserted house.

THE DOLL'S HOUSE

By Katherine Mansfield

When dear old Mrs. Hay went back to town after staying with the Burnells she sent the children a doll's house. It was so big that the carter and Pat carried it into the courtyard, and there it stayed, propped up on two wooden boxes beside the feed-room door. No harm could come to it; it was summer. And perhaps the smell of paint would have gone by the time it had to be taken in. For, really, the smell of paint coming from that doll's house ("Sweet of old Mrs. Hay, of course; most sweet and generous!")—but the smell of paint was quite enough to make any one seriously ill, in Aunt Beryl's opinion. Even before the sacking was taken off. And when it was. . . .

There stood the doll's house, a dark, oily, spinach green, picked out with bright yellow. Its two solid little chimneys, glued on to the roof, were painted red and white, and the door, gleaming with yellow varnish, was like a little slab of toffee. Four windows, real windows, were divided into panes by a broad streak of green. There was actually a tiny porch, too, painted yellow, with big lumps of congealed paint hanging along the edge.

But perfect, perfect little house! Who could pos-

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sibly mind the smell? It was part of the joy, part of the newness.

"Open it quickly, some one!"

The hook at the side was stuck fast. Pat pried it open with his penknife, and the whole house-front swung back, and—there you were, gazing at one and the same moment into the drawing-room and dining-room, the kitchen and two bedrooms. That is the way for a house to open! Why don't all houses open like that? How much more exciting than peering through the slit of a door into a mean little hall with a hatstand and two umbrellas! That is—isn't it?—what you long to know about a house when you put your hand on the knocker. Perhaps it is the way God opens houses at dead of night when He is taking a quiet turn with an angel. . . .

"O-oh!" The Burnell children sounded as tho they were in despair. It was too marvelous; it was too much for them. They had never seen anything like it in their lives. All the rooms were papered. There were pictures on the walls, painted on the paper, with gold frames complete. Red carpet covered all the floors except the kitchen; red plush chairs in the drawing-room, green in the dining-room; tables, beds with real bedclothes, a cradle, a stove, a dresser with tiny plates and one big jug. But what Kezia liked more than anything, what she liked frightfully, was the lamp. It stood in the middle of the dining-room table, an exquisite little amber lamp with a white globe. It was even filled all ready for lighting, tho, of course, you couldn't light it. But there was something inside that looked like oil, and that moved when you shook it.

The father and mother dolls, who sprawled very

stiff as tho they had fainted in the drawing-room, and their two little children asleep upstairs, were really too big for the doll's house. They didn't look as tho they belonged. But the lamp was perfect. It seemed to smile at Kezia, to say, "I live here." The lamp was real.

The Burnell children could hardly walk to school fast enough the next morning. They burned to tell everybody, to describe, to—well—to boast about their doll's house before the school-bell rang.

"I'm to tell," said Isabel, "because I'm the eldest. And you two can join in after. But I'm to tell first."

There was nothing to answer. Isabel was bossy, but she was always right, and Lottie and Kezia knew too well the powers that went with being eldest. They brushed through the thick buttercups at the road edge and said nothing.

"And I'm to choose who's to come and see it first. Mother said I might."

For it had been arranged that while the doll's house stood in the courtyard they might ask the girls at school, two at a time, to come and look. Not to stay to tea, of course, or to come traipsing through the house. But just to stand quietly in the courtyard while Isabel pointed out the beauties, and Lottie and Kezia looked pleased. . . .

But hurry as they might, by the time they had reached the tarred palings of the boys' playground the bell had begun to jangle. They only just had time to whip off their hats and fall into line before the roll was called. Never mind. Isabel tried to make up for it by looking very important and mysterious and by whispering behind her hand to the girls near her, "Got something to tell you at playtime."

Playtime came and Isabel was surrounded. The girls of her class nearly fought to put their arms round her, to walk away with her, to beam flatteringly, to be her special friend. She held quite a court under the huge pine trees at the side of the playground. Nudging, giggling together, the little girls pressed up close. And the only two who stayed outside the ring were the two who were always outside, the little Kelveys. They knew better than to come anywhere near the Burnells.

For the fact was, the school the Burnell children went to was not at all the kind of place their parents would have chosen if there had been any choice. But there was none. It was the only school for miles. And the consequence was all the children in the neighborhood, the Judge's little girls, the doctor's daughters, the storekeeper's children, the milkman's, were forced to mix together. Not to speak of there being an equal number of rude, rough little boys as well. But the line had to be drawn somewhere. It was drawn at the Kelveys. Many of the children, including the Burnells, were not allowed even to speak to them. They walked past the Kelveys with their heads in the air, and as they set the fashion in all matters of behavior, the Kelveys were shunned by everybody. Even the teacher had a special voice for them, and a special smile for the other children when Lil Kelvey came up to her desk with a bunch of dreadfully common-looking flowers.

They were the daughters of a spry, hardworking little washerwoman, who went about from house to house by the day. This was awful enough. But where was Mr. Kelvey? Nobody knew for certain. But everybody said he was in prison. So they were

the daughters of a washerwoman and a gaolbird. Very nice company for other people's children! And they looked it. Why Mrs. Kelvey made them so conspicuous was hard to understand. The truth was they were dressed in "bits" given to her by the people for whom she worked. Lil, for instance, who was a stout, plain child, with big freckles, came to school in a dress made from a green art-serge table-cloth of the Burnells', with red plush sleeves from the Logans' curtains. Her hat, perched on top of her forehead, was a grown-up woman's hat, once the property of Miss Lecky, the postmistress. It was turned up at the back and trimmed with a large scarlet quill. What a little guy she looked! It was impossible not to laugh. And her little sister, our Else, wore a long white dress, rather like a nightgown, and a pair of little boy's boots. But whatever our Else wore she would have looked strange. She was a tiny wishbone of a child, with cropped hair and enormous solemn eyes—a little white owl. Nobody had ever seen her smile; she scarcely ever spoke. She went through life holding on to Lil, with a piece of Lil's skirt screwed up in her hand. Where Lil went our Else followed. In the playground, on the road going to and from school, there was Lil marching in front and our Else holding on behind. Only when she wanted anything, or when she was out of breath, our Else gave Lil a tug, a twitch, and Lil stopped and turned round. The Kelveys never failed to understand each other.

Now they hovered at the edge; you couldn't stop them listening. When the little girls turned round and sneered, Lil, as usual, gave her silly, shamefaced smile, but our Else only looked.

And Isabel's voice, so very proud, went on telling. The carpet made a great sensation, but so did the beds with real bedclothes, and the stove with an oven door.

When she finished Kezia broke in. "You've forgotten the lamp, Isabel."

"Oh, yes," said Isabel, "and there's a teeny little lamp, all made of yellow glass, with a white globe that stands on the dining-room table. You couldn't tell it from a real one."

"The lamp's best of all," cried Kezia. She thought Isabel wasn't making half enough of the little lamp. But nobody paid any attention. Isabel was choosing the two who were to come back with them that afternoon and see it. She chose Emmie Cole and Lena Logan. But when the others knew they were all to have a chance, they couldn't be nice enough to Isabel. One by one they put their arms round Isabel's waist and walked her off. They had something to whisper to her, a secret. "Isabel's *my* friend."

Only the little Kelveys moved away forgotten; there was nothing more for them to hear.

Days passed, and as more children saw the doll's house, the fame of it spread. It became the one subject, the rage. The one question was, "Have you seen Burnells' doll's house? Oh, ain't it lovely!" "Haven't you seen it? Oh, I say!"

Even the dinner hour was given up to talking about it. The little girls sat under the pines eating their thick mutton sandwiches and big slabs of johnny cake spread with butter. While always, as near as they could get, sat the Kelveys, our Else holding on to Lil, listening too, while they chewed their jam sand-

wiches out of a newspaper soaked with large red blobs. . . .

"Mother," said Kezia, "can't I ask the Kelveys just once?"

"Certainly not, Kezia."

"But why not?"

"Run away, Kezia; you know quite well why not."

At last everybody had seen it except them. On that day the subject rather flagged. It was the dinner hour. The children stood together under the pine trees, and suddenly, as they looked at the Kelveys eating out of their paper, always by themselves, always listening, they wanted to be horrid to them. Emmie Cole started the whisper.

"Lil Kelvey's going to be a servant when she grows up."

"O-oh, how awful!" said Isabel Burnell, and she made eyes at Emmie.

Emmie swallowed in a very meaning way and nodded to Isabel as she'd seen her mother do on those occasions.

"It's true—it's true—it's true," she said.

Then Lena Logan's little eyes snapped. "Shall I ask her?" she whispered.

"Bet you don't," said Jessie May.

"Pooh, I'm not frightened," said Lena. Suddenly she gave a little squeal and danced in front of the other girls. "Watch! Watch me! Watch me now!" said Lena. And sliding, gliding, dragging one foot, giggling behind her hand, Lena went over to the Kelveys.

Lil looked up from her dinner. She wrapped the

rest quickly away. Our Else stopped chewing. What was coming now?

"Is it true you're going to be a servant when you grow up, Lil Kelvey?" shrilled Lena.

Dead silence. But instead of answering, Lil only gave her silly, shamefaced smile. She didn't seem to mind the question at all. What a sell for Lena! The girls began to titter.

Lena couldn't stand that. She put her hands on her hips; she shot forward. "Yah, yer father's in prison!" she hissed, spitefully.

This was such a marvellous thing to have said that the little girls rushed away in a body, deeply, deeply excited, wild with joy. Some one found a long rope, and they began skipping. And never did they skip so high, run in and out so fast, or do such daring things as on that morning.

In the afternoon Pat called for the Burnell children with the buggy and they drove home. There were visitors. Isabel and Lottie, who liked visitors, went upstairs to change their pinafores. But Kezia thieved out at the back. Nobody was about; she began to swing on the big white gates of the courtyard. Presently, looking along the road, she saw two little dots. They grew bigger, they were coming towards her. Now she could see that one was in front and one close behind. Now she could see that they were the Kelveys. Kezia stopped swinging. She slipped off the gate as if she was going to run away. Then she hesitated. The Kelveys came nearer, and beside them walked their shadows, very long, stretching right across the road with their heads in the buttercups. Kezia clambered back on the gate; she had made up her mind; she swung out.

"Hullo," she said to the passing Kelveys.

They were so astounded that they stopped. Lil gave her silly smile. Our Else stared.

"You can come and see our doll's house if you want to," said Kezia, and she dragged one toe on the ground. But at that Lil turned red and shook her head quickly.

"Why not?" asked Kezia.

Lil gasped, then said, "Your ma told our ma you wasn't to speak to us."

"Oh, well," said Kezia. She didn't know what to reply. "It doesn't matter. You can come and see our doll's house all the same. Come on. Nobody's looking."

But Lil shook her head still harder.

"Don't you want to?" asked Kezia.

Suddenly there was a twitch, a tug at Lil's skirt. She turned round. Our Else was looking at her with big, imploring eyes; she was frowning; she wanted to go. For a moment Lil looked at our Else very doubtfully. But then our Else twitched her skirt again. She started forward. Kezia led the way. Like two little stray cats they followed across the courtyard to where the doll's house stood.

"There it is," said Kezia.

There was a pause. Lil breathed loudly, almost snorted; our Else was still as a stone.

"I'll open it for you," said Kezia kindly. She undid the hook and they looked inside.

"There's the drawing-room and the dining-room, and that's the—"

"Kezia!"

Oh, what a start they gave!

"Kezia!"

It was Aunt Beryl's voice. They turned round. At

the back door stood Aunt Beryl, staring as if she couldn't believe what she saw.

"How dare you ask the little Kelveys into the courtyard?" said her cold, furious voice. "You know as well as I do, you're not allowed to talk to them. Run away, children, run away at once. And don't come back again," said Aunt Beryl. And she stepped into the yard and shooed them out as if they were chickens.

"Off you go immediately!" she called, cold and proud.

They did not need telling twice. Burning with shame, shrinking together, Lil huddling along like her mother, our Else dazed, somehow they crossed the big courtyard and squeezed through the white gate.

"Wicked, disobedient little girl!" said Aunt Beryl bitterly to Kezia, and she slammed the doll's house to.

The afternoon had been awful. A letter had come from Willie Brent, a terrifying, threatening letter, saying if she did not meet him that evening in Pulman's Bush, he'd come to the front door and ask the reason why! But now that she had frightened those little rats of Kelveys and given Kezia a good scolding, her heart felt lighter. That ghastly pressure was gone. She went back to the house humming.

When the Kelveys were well out of sight of Burnells', they sat down to rest on a big red drainpipe by the side of the road. Lil's cheeks were still burning; she took off the hat with the quill and held it on her knee. Dreamily they looked over the hay paddocks, past the creek, to the group of wattles where Logan's cows stood waiting to be milked. What were their thoughts?

Presently our Else nudged up close to her sister. But now she had forgotten the cross lady. She put out a finger and stroked her sister's quill; she smiled her rare smile.

"I seen the little lamp," she said, softly.

Then both were silent once more.

A TERRIBLY STRANGE BED

By Wilkie Collins

Shortly after my education at college was finished, I happened to be staying at Paris with an English friend. We were both young men then, and lived, I am afraid, rather a wild life, in the delightful city of our sojourn. One night we were idling about the neighborhood of the Palais Royal, doubtful to what amusement we should next betake ourselves. My friend proposed a visit to Frascati's; but his suggestion was not to my taste. I knew Frascati's, as the French saying is, by heart, had lost and won plenty of five-franc pieces there, merely for amusement's sake, until it was amusement no longer, and was thoroughly tired, in fact, of all the ghastly respectabilities of such a social anomaly as a respectable gambling-house.

"For Heaven's sake," said I to my friend, "let us go somewhere where we can see a little genuine, blackguard, poverty-stricken gaming, with no false gingerbread glitter thrown over it at all. Let us get away from fashionable Frascati's, to a house where they don't mind letting in a man with a ragged coat, or a man with no coat, ragged or otherwise."

"Very well," said my friend, "we needn't go out of the Palais Royal to find the sort of company you want. Here's the place just before us: as blackguard

a place, by all report, as you could possibly wish to see."

In another minute we arrived at the door, and entered the house.

When we got upstairs, and had left our hats and sticks with the door-keeper, we were admitted into the chief gambling-room. We did not find many people assembled there. But, few as the men were who looked up at us on our entrance, they were all types—lamentably true types—of their respective classes.

We had come to see blackguards; but these men were something worse. There is a comic side, more or less appreciable, in all blackguardism; here there was nothing but tragedy—mute, weird tragedy. The quiet in the room was horrible. The thin, haggard, long-haired young man, whose sunken eyes fiercely watched the turning up of the cards, never spoke; the flabby, fat-faced, pimply player, who pricked his piece of pasteboard perseveringly, to register how often black won, and how often red, never spoke; the dirty, wrinkled old man, with the vulture eyes and the darned great-coat, who had lost his last sou, and still looked on desperately after he could play no longer, never spoke. Even the voice of the croupier sounded as if it were strangely dulled and thickened in the atmosphere of the room. I had entered the place to laugh, but the spectacle before me was something to weep over. I soon found it necessary to take refuge in excitement from the depression of spirits which was fast stealing on me. Unfortunately I sought the nearest excitement, by going to the table and beginning to play. Still more unfortunately, as the event will show, I won—won prodigiously; won incredibly; won

at such a rate that the regular players at the table crowded round me; and staring at my stakes with hungry, superstitious eyes, whispered to one another that the English stranger was going to break the bank.

The game was Rouge et Noir. I had played at it in every city in Europe, without, however, the care or the wish to study the Theory of Chances—that philosopher's stone of all gamblers! And a gambler, in the strict sense of the word, I had never been. I was heart-whole from the corroding passion for play. My gaming was a mere idle amusement. I never resorted to it by necessity, because I never knew what it was to want money. I never practised it so incessantly as to lose more than I could afford, or to gain more than I could coolly pocket without being thrown off my balance by my good luck. In short, I had hitherto frequented gambling-tables—just as I frequented ball-rooms and opera-houses—because they amused me, and because I had nothing better to do with my leisure hours.

But on this occasion it was very different—now, for the first time in my life, I felt what the passion for play really was. My successes first bewildered, and then, in the most literal meaning of the word, intoxicated me. Incredible as it may appear, it is nevertheless true, that I only lost when I attempted to estimate chances, and played according to previous calculation. If I left everything to luck, and staked without any care or consideration, I was sure to win—to win in the face of every recognized probability in favor of the bank. At first some of the men present ventured their money safely enough on my color; but I speedily increased my stakes to sums which they dared not risk. One after another they

left off playing, and breathlessly looked on at my game.

Still, time after time, I staked higher and higher, and still won. The excitement in the room rose to fever pitch. The silence was interrupted by a deep-muttered chorus of oaths and exclamations in different languages, every time the gold was shoveled across to my side of the table—even the imperturbable croupier dashed his rake on the floor in a (French) fury of astonishment at my success. But one man present preserved his self-possession, and that man was my friend. He came to my side, and whispered in English, begged me to leave the place, satisfied with what I had already gained. I must do him the justice to say that he repeated his warnings and entreaties several times, and only left me and went away, after I had rejected his advice (I was to all intents and purposes gambling drunk) in terms which rendered it impossible for him to address me again that night.

Shortly after he had gone, a hoarse voice behind me cried, "Permit me, my dear sir—permit me to restore to their proper place, two napoleons which you have dropped. Wonderful luck, sir! I pledge you my word of honor, as an old soldier, in the course of my long experience in this sort of thing, I never saw such luck as yours—never! Go on, sir—*Sacre mille bombes!* Go on boldly, and break the bank!"

I turned round and saw, nodding and smiling at me with inveterate civility, a tall man, dressed in a frogged and braided surtout.

If I had been in my senses, I should have considered him, personally, as being rather a suspicious specimen of an old soldier. He had goggling, bloodshot eyes, mangy mustaches, and a broken nose. His voice betrayed a barrack-room intonation of the worst order,

and he had the dirtiest pair of hands I ever saw—even in France. These little personal peculiarities exercised, however, no repelling influence on me. In the mad excitement, the reckless triumph of that moment, I was ready to "fraternize" with anybody who encouraged me in my game. I accepted the old soldier's offered pinch of snuff; clapped him on the back, and swore he was the honestest fellow in the world—the most glorious relic of the Grand Army that I had ever met with. "Go on!" cried my military friend, snapping his fingers in ecstasy—"Go on, and win! Break the bank—*Mille tonnerres!* my gallant English comrade, break the bank!"

And I *did* go on—went on at such a rate, that in another quarter of an hour the croupier called out, "Gentlemen, the bank has discontinued for to-night." All the notes, and all the gold in that "bank," now lay in a heap under my hands; the whole floating capital of the gambling-house was waiting to pour into my pockets!

"Tie up the money in your pocket-handkerchief, my worthy sir," said the old soldier, as I wildly plunged my hands into my heap of gold. "Tie it up, as we used to tie up a bit of dinner in the Grand Army; your winnings are too heavy for any breeches-pockets that ever were sewed. There! that's it—shovel them in, notes and all! *Credie!* what luck! Stop! another napoleon on the floor. *Ah! sacre petit polisson de Napoleon!* have I found thee at last? Now then, sir—two tight double knots each way with your honorable permission, and the money's safe. Feel it! feel it, fortunate sir! hard and round as a cannon-ball—*À bas* if they had only fired such cannon-balls at us at Austerlitz—*nom d'une pipe!* if they only had! And now,

as an ancient grenadier, as an ex-brave of the French army, what remains for me to do? I ask what? Simply this, to entreat my valued English friend to drink a bottle of champagne with me, and toast the goddess Fortune in foaming goblets before we part!"

"Excellent ex-brave! Convivial ancient grenadier! Champagne by all means! An English cheer for an old soldier! Hurrah! hurrah! Another English cheer for the goddess Fortune! Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

"Bravo! the Englishman; the amiable, gracious Englishman, in whose veins circulates the vivacious blood of France! Another glass? *À bas!*—the bottle is empty! Never mind! *Vive le vin!* I, the old soldier, order another bottle, and half a pound of *bonbons* with it!"

"No, no, ex-brave; never—ancient grenadier! *Your* bottle last time; *my* bottle this! Behold it! Toast away! The French Army! the great Napoleon! the present company! the croupier! the honest croupier's wife and daughters—if he has any! the ladies generally! everybody in the world!"

By the time the second bottle of champagne was emptied, I felt as if I had been drinking liquid fire—my brain seemed all aflame. No excess in wine had ever had this effect on me before in my life. Was it the result of a stimulant acting upon my system when I was in a highly excited state? Was my stomach in a particularly disordered condition? Or was the champagne amazingly strong?

"Ex-brave of the French Army!" cried I, in a mad state of exhilaration, "*I* am on fire! how are *you?* You have set me on fire! Do you hear, my hero of Austerlitz? Let us have a third bottle of champagne to put the flame out!"

The old soldier wagged his head, rolled his goggle-eyes, until I expected to see them slip out of their sockets; placed his dirty forefinger by the side of his broken nose; solemnly ejaculated "Coffee!" and immediately ran off into an inner room.

The word pronounced by the eccentric veteran seemed to have a magical effect on the rest of the company present. With one accord they all rose to depart. Probably they had expected to profit by my intoxication; but finding that my new friend was benevolently bent on preventing me from getting dead drunk, had now abandoned all hope of thriving pleasantly on my winnings. Whatever their motive might be, at any rate they went away in a body. When the old soldier returned and sat down again opposite to me at the table, we had the room to ourselves. I could see the croupier, in a sort of vestibule which opened out of it, eating his supper in solitude. The silence was now deeper than ever.

A sudden change, too, had come over the "ex-brave." He assumed a portentously solemn look; and when he spoke to me again, his speech was ornamented by no oaths, enforced by no finger-snapping, enlivened by no apostrophes or exclamations.

"Listen, my dear sir," said he, in mysteriously confidential tones—"listen to an old soldier's advice. I have been to the mistress of the house (a very charming woman, with a genius for cookery!) to impress on her the necessity of making us some particularly strong and good coffee. You must drink this coffee in order to get rid of your little amiable exaltation of spirits before you think of going home—you *must*, my good and gracious friend! With all that money to take home to-night, it is a sacred duty to yourself to have

your wits about you. You are known to be a winner to an enormous extent by several gentlemen present to-night, who, in a certain point of view, are very worthy and excellent fellows; but they are mortal men, my dear sir, and they have their amiable weaknesses! Need I say more? Ah, no, no! you understand me! Now, this is what you must do—send for a cabriolet when you feel quite well again—draw up all the windows when you get into it—and tell the driver to take you home only through the large and well-lighted thoroughfares. Do this; and you and your money will be safe. Do this; and to-morrow you will thank an old soldier for giving you a word of honest advice."

Just as the ex-brave ended his oration in very lachrymose tones, the coffee came in, ready poured out in two cups. My attentive friend handed me one of the cups with a bow. I was parched with thirst, and drank it off at a draft. Almost instantly afterward I was seized with a fit of giddiness, and felt more completely intoxicated than ever. The room whirled round and round furiously; the old soldier seemed to be regularly bobbing up and down before me like the piston of a steam-engine. I was half deafened by a violent singing in my ears; a feeling of utter bewilderment, helplessness, idiocy, overcame me. I rose from my chair, holding on by the table to keep my balance; and stammered out that I felt dreadfully unwell—so unwell that I did not know how I was to get home.

"My dear friend," answered the old soldier—and even his voice seemed to be bobbing up and down as he spoke—"my dear friend, it would be madness to go home in *your* state; you would be sure to lose your money; you might be robbed and murdered with the

greatest ease. *I* am going to sleep here: *do* you sleep here, too—they make up capital beds in this house—take one; sleep off the effects of the wine, and go home safely with your winnings to-morrow—to-morrow, in broad daylight."

I had but two ideas left: one, that I must never let go hold of my handkerchief full of money; the other, that I must lie down somewhere immediately, and fall off into a comfortable sleep. So I agreed to the proposal about the bed, and took the offered arm of the old soldier, carrying my money with my disengaged hand. Preceded by the croupier, we passed along some passages and up a flight of stairs into the bedroom which I was to occupy. The ex-brave shook me warmly by the hand, proposed that we should breakfast together, and then, followed by the croupier, left me for the night.

I ran to the wash-hand stand; drank some of the water in my jug; poured the rest out, and plunged my face into it; then sat down in a chair and tried to compose myself. I soon felt better. The change for my lungs from the fetid atmosphere of the gambling-house to the cool air of the apartment I now occupied, the almost equally refreshing change for my eyes, from the glaring gaslights of the "salon" to the dim, quiet flicker of one bedroom-candle, aided wonderfully the restorative effects of cold water. The giddiness left me, and I began to feel a little like a reasonable being again. My first thought was of the risk of sleeping all night in a gambling-house; my second, of the still greater risk of trying to get out after the house was closed, and of going home alone at night through the streets of Paris with a large sum of money about me. I had slept in worse places than this on my travels;

so I determined to lock, bolt, and barricade my door, and take my chance till the next morning.

Accordingly, I secured myself against all intrusion; looked under the bed, and into the cupboard; tried the fastening of the window; and then, satisfied that I had taken every proper precaution, pulled off my upper clothing, put my light, which was a dim one, on the hearth among a feathery litter of wood-ashes, and got into bed, with the handkerchief full of money under my pillow.

I soon felt not only that I could not go to sleep, but that I could not even close my eyes. I was wide awake, and in a high fever. Every nerve in my body trembled—every one of my senses seemed to be preternaturally sharpened. I tossed and rolled, and tried every kind of position and perseveringly sought out the cold corners of the bed, and all to no purpose. Now I thrust my arms over the clothes; now I poked them under the clothes; now I violently shot my legs straight out down to the bottom of the bed; now I convulsively coiled them up as near my chin as they would go; now I shook out my crumpled pillow, changed it to the cool side, patted it flat, and lay down quietly on my back; now I fiercely doubled it in two, set it up on end, thrust it against the board of the bed, and tried a sitting posture. Every effort was in vain; I groaned with vexation as I felt that I was in for a sleepless night.

What could I do? I had no book to read. And yet, unless I found out some method of diverting my mind, I felt certain that I was in the condition to imagine all sorts of horrors; to rack my brain with forebodings of every possible and impossible danger; in short, to

pass the night in suffering all conceivable varieties of nervous terror.

I raised myself on my elbow, and looked about the room—which was brightened by a lovely moonlight pouring straight through the window—to see if it contained any pictures or ornaments that I could at all clearly distinguish. While my eyes wandered from wall to wall, a remembrance of Le Maistre's delightful little book, "Voyage autour de ma Chambre," occurred to me. I resolved to imitate the French author, and find occupation and amusement enough to relieve the tedium of my wakefulness, by making a mental inventory of every article of furniture I could see, and by following up to their sources the multitude of associations which even a chair, a table, or a wash-hand stand may be made to call forth.

In the nervous, unsettled state of my mind at that moment, I found it much easier to make my inventory than to make my reflections, and thereupon soon gave up all hope of thinking in Le Maistre's fanciful track—or, indeed, of thinking at all. I looked about the room at the different articles of furniture, and did nothing more.

There was, first, the bed I was lying in; a four-post bed, of all things in the world to meet with in Paris—yes, a thorough clumsy British four-poster, with a regular top lined with chintz—the regular fringed valance all round—the regular stifling, unwholesome curtains, which I remembered having mechanically drawn back against the posts without particularly noticing the bed when I first got into the room. Then there was the marble-topped wash-hand stand, from which the water I had spilled, in my hurry to pour it out, was still dripping, slowly and more slowly, on to

the brick floor. Then two small chairs, with my coat, waistcoat, and trousers flung on them. Then a large elbow-chair covered with dirty white dimity, with my cravat and shirt collar thrown over the back. Then a chest of drawers with two of the brass handles off, and a tawdry, broken china inkstand placed on it by way of ornament for the top. Then the dressing-table, adorned by a very small looking-glass, and a very large pincushion. Then the window—an unusually large window. Then a dark old picture, which the feeble candle dimly showed me. It was the picture of a fellow in a high Spanish hat, crowned with a plume of towering feathers. A swarthy, sinister ruffian, looking upward, shading his eyes with his hand, and looking intently upward—it might be at some tall gallows on which he was going to be hanged. At any rate, he had the appearance of thoroughly deserving it.

This picture put a kind of constraint upon me to look upward too—at the top of the bed. It was a gloomy and not an interesting object, and I looked back at the picture. I counted the feathers in the man's hat—they stood out in relief—three white, two green. I observed the crown of his hat, which was of a conical shape, according to the fashion supposed to have been favored by Guido Fawkes. I wondered what he was looking up at. It couldn't be at the stars; such a desperado was neither astrologer nor astronomer. It must be at the high gallows, and he was going to be hanged presently. Would the executioner come into possession of his conical crowned hat and plume of feathers? I counted the feathers again—three white, two green.

While I still lingered over this very improving and intellectual employment, my thoughts insensibly began

to wander. The moonlight shining into the room reminded me of a certain moonlight night in England—the night after a picnic party in a Welsh valley. Every incident of the drive homeward, through lovely scenery, which the moonlight made lovelier than ever, came back to my remembrance, tho I had never given the picnic a thought for years; tho, if I had *tried* to recollect it, I could certainly have recalled little or nothing of that scene long past. Of all the wonderful faculties that help to tell us we are immortal, which speaks the sublime truth more eloquently than memory? Here was I, in a strange house of the most suspicious character, in a situation of uncertainty, and even of peril, which might seem to make the cool exercise of my recollection almost out of the question; nevertheless, remembering, quite involuntarily, places, people, conversations, minute circumstances of every kind, which I had thought forgotten forever; which I could not possibly have recalled at will, even under the most favorable auspices. And what cause had produced in a moment the whole of this strange, complicated, mysterious effect? Nothing but some rays of moonlight shining in at my bedroom window.

I was still thinking of the picnic—of our merriment on the drive home—of the sentimental young lady who *would* quote *Childe Harold* because it was moonlight. I was absorbed by these past scenes and past amusements, when, in an instant, the thread on which my memories hung snapped asunder; my attention immediately came back to present things more vividly than ever, and I found myself, I neither knew why nor wherefore, looking hard at the picture again.

Looking for what?

Good God! the man had pulled his hat down on his

brows! No! the hat itself was gone! Where was the conical crown? Where the feathers—three white, two green? Not there! In place of the hat and feathers, what dusky object was it that now hid his forehead, his eyes, his shading hand?

Was the bed moving?

I turned on my back and looked up. Was I mad? drunk? dreaming? giddy again? or was the top of the bed really moving down—sinking slowly, regularly, silently, horribly, right down throughout the whole of its length and breadth—right down upon me, as I lay underneath?

My blood seemed to stand still. A deadly, paralyzing coldness stole all over me as I turned my head round on the pillow and determined to test whether the bed-top was really moving or not, by keeping my eye on the man in the picture.

The next look in that direction was enough. The dull, black, frowsy outline of the valance above me was within an inch of being parallel with his waist. I still looked breathlessly. And steadily and slowly—very slowly—I saw the figure, and the line of frame below the figure, vanish, as the valance moved down before it.

I am, constitutionally, anything but timid. I have been on more than one occasion in peril of my life, and have not lost my self-possession for an instant; but when the conviction first settled on my mind that the bed-top was really moving, was steadily and continuously sinking down upon me, I looked up shuddering, helpless, panic-stricken, beneath the hideous machinery for murder, which was advancing closer and closer to suffocate me where I lay.

I looked up, motionless, speechless, breathless. The

candle, fully spent, went out; but the moonlight still brightened the room. Down and down, without pausing and without sounding, came the bed-top, and still my panic terror seemed to bind me faster and faster to the mattress on which I lay—down and down it sank, till the dusty odor from the lining of the canopy came stealing into my nostrils.

At that final moment the instinct of self-preservation startled me out of my trance, and I moved at last. There was just room for me to roll myself sidewise off the bed. As I dropped noiselessly to the floor, the edge of the murderous canopy touched me on the shoulder.

Without stopping to draw my breath, without wiping the cold sweat from my face, I rose instantly on my knees to watch the bed-top. I was literally spellbound by it. If I had heard footsteps behind me, I could not have turned round; if a means of escape had been miraculously provided for me, I could not have moved to take advantage of it. The whole life in me was, at that moment, concentrated in my eyes.

It descended—the whole canopy, with the fringe round it, came down—down—close down; so close that there was not room now to squeeze my finger between the bed-top and the bed. I felt at the sides, and discovered that what had appeared to me from beneath to be the ordinary light canopy of a four-post bed was in reality a thick, broad mattress, the substance of which was concealed by the valance and its fringe. I looked up and saw the four posts rising hideously bare. In the middle of the bed-top was a huge wooden screw that had evidently worked it down through a hole in the ceiling, just as ordinary presses are worked down on the substance selected for compression. The

frightful apparatus moved without making the faintest noise. There had been no creaking as it came down; there was now not the faintest sound from the room above. Amidst a dead and awful silence I beheld before me—in the Nineteenth Century, and in the civilized capital of France—such a machine for secret murder by suffocation as might have existed in the worst days of the Inquisition, in the lonely inns among the Hartz Mountains, in the mysterious tribunals of Westphalia! Still, as I looked on it, I could not move, I could hardly breathe, but I began to recover the power of thinking, and in a moment I discovered the murderous conspiracy framed against me in all its horror.

My cup of coffee had been drugged, and drugged too strongly. I had been saved from being smothered by having taken an overdose of some narcotic. How I had chafed and fretted at the fever fit which had preserved my life by keeping me awake! How recklessly I had confided myself to the two wretches who had led me into this room, determined, for the sake of my winnings, to kill me in my sleep by the surest and most horrible contrivance for secretly accomplishing my destruction! How many men, winners like me, had slept, as I had proposed to sleep, in that bed, and had never been seen or heard of more! I shuddered at the bare idea of it.

But ere long all thought was again suspended by the sight of the murderous canopy moving once more. After it had remained on the bed—as nearly as I could guess—about ten minutes, it began to move up again. The villains who worked it from above evidently believed that their purpose was now accomplished. Slowly and silently, as it had descended, that horrible

bed-top rose toward its former place. When it reached the upper extremities of the four posts, it reached the ceiling too. Neither hole nor screw could be seen; the bed became in appearance an ordinary bed again—the canopy an ordinary canopy—even to the most suspicious eyes.

Now, for the first time, I was able to move—to rise from my knees—to dress myself in my upper clothing—and to consider of how I should escape. If I betrayed by the smallest noise that the attempt to suffocate me had failed, I was certain to be murdered. Had I made any noise already? I listened intently, looking toward the door.

No! No footsteps in the passage outside—no sound of a tread, light or heavy, in the room above—absolute silence everywhere. Besides locking and bolting my door, I had moved an old wooden chest against it, which I had found under the bed. To remove this chest (my blood ran cold as I thought of what its contents *might* be!) without making some disturbance was impossible; and, moreover, to think of escaping through the house, now barred up for the night, was sheer insanity. Only one chance was left me—the window. I stole to it on tiptoe.

My bedroom was on the first floor, above an entresol, and looked into the back street. I raised my hand to open the window, knowing that on that action hung, by the merest hair-breadth, my chance of safety. They keep vigilant watch in a House of Murder. If any part of the frame cracked, if the hinge creaked, I was a lost man! It must have occupied me at least five minutes, reckoning by time—five *hours* reckoning by suspense—to open that window. I succeeded in doing it silently—in doing it with all the dexterity of

a house-breaker—and then looked down into the street. To leap the distance beneath me would be almost certain destruction! Next, I looked round at the sides of the house. Down the left side ran a thick water-pipe—it passed close by the outer edge of the window. The moment I saw the pipe, I knew I was saved. My breath came and went freely for the first time since I had seen the canopy of the bed moving down upon me!

To some men the means of escape which I had discovered might have seemed difficult and dangerous enough—to *me* the prospect of slipping down the pipe into the street did not suggest even a thought of peril. I had always been accustomed, by the practise of gymnastics, to keep up my school-boy powers as a daring and expert climber; and knew that my head, hands, and feet would serve me faithfully in any hazards of ascent or descent. I had already got one leg over the window-sill, when I remembered the handkerchief filled with money under my pillow. I could well have afforded to leave it behind me, but I was revengefully determined that the miscreants of the gambling-house should miss their plunder as well as their victim. So I went back to the bed and tied the heavy handkerchief at my back by my cravat.

Just as I had made it tight and fixed it in a comfortable place, I thought I heard a sound of breathing outside the door. The chill feeling of horror ran through me again as I listened. No! Dead silence still in the passage—I had only heard the night air blowing softly into the room. The next moment I was on the window-sill—and the next I had a firm grip on the water-pipe with my hands and knees.

I slid down into the street easily and quietly, as I thought I should, and immediately set off at the top

of my speed to a branch "Prefecture" of Police, which I knew was situated in the immediate neighborhood. A "Sub-prefect," and several picked men among his subordinates, happened to be up, maturing, I believe, some scheme for discovering the perpetrator of a mysterious murder which all Paris was talking of just then. When I began my story, in a breathless hurry and in very bad French, I could see that the Sub-prefect suspected me of being a drunken Englishman who had robbed somebody; but he soon altered his opinion as I went on, and before I had anything like concluded, he shoved all the papers before him into a drawer, put on his hat, supplied me with another (for I was bareheaded), ordered a file of soldiers, desired his expert followers to get ready all sorts of tools for breaking open doors and ripping up brick flooring, and took my arm, in the most friendly and familiar manner possible, to lead me with him out of the house. I will venture to say that when the Sub-prefect was a little boy, and was taken for the first time to the play, he was not half as much pleased as he was now at the job in prospect for him at the gambling-house!

Away we went through the streets, the Sub-prefect cross-examining and congratulating me in the same breath as we marched at the head of our formidable *posse comitatus.* Sentinels were placed at the back and front of the house the moment we got to it, a tremendous battery of knocks was directed against the door; a light appeared at a window; I was told to conceal myself behind the police—then came more knocks, and a cry of "Open in the name of the law!" At that terrible summons bolts and locks gave way before an invisible hand, and the moment after the Sub-prefect was in the passage, confronting a waiter

half dressed and ghastly pale. This was the short dialog which immediately took place:

"We want to see the Englishman who is sleeping in this house?"

"He went away hours ago."

"He did no such thing. His friend went away; *he* remained. Show us to his bedroom!"

"I swear to you, Monsieur le Sous-prefet, he is not here! He—"

"I swear to you, Monsieur le Garçon, he is. He slept here—he didn't find your bed comfortable—he came to us to complain of it—here he is among my men—and here am I ready to look for a flea or two in his bedstead. Renaudin!" (calling to one of the subordinates, and pointing to the waiter), "collar that man, and tie his hands behind him. Now, then, gentlemen, let us walk upstairs!"

Every man and woman in the house was secured—the "Old Soldier" the first. Then I identified the bed in which I had slept, and then we went into the room above.

No object that was at all extraordinary appeared in any part of it. The Sub-prefect looked round the place, commanded everybody to be silent, stamped twice on the floor, called for a candle, looked attentively at the spot he had stamped on, and ordered the flooring there to be carefully taken up. This was done in no time. Lights were produced, and we saw a deep raftered cavity between the floor of this room and the ceiling of the room beneath. Through this cavity there ran perpendicularly a sort of case of iron thickly greased; and inside the case appeared the screw, which communicated with the bed-top below. Extra lengths of screw, freshly oiled; levers covered with felt; all

the complete upper works of a heavy press—constructed with infernal ingenuity so as to join the fixtures below, and when taken to pieces again to go into the smallest possible compass—were next discovered and pulled out on the floor. After some little difficulty the Sub-prefect succeeded in putting the machinery together, and, leaving his men to work it, descended with me to the bedroom. The smothering canopy was then lowered, but not so noiselessly as I had seen it lowered. When I mentioned this to the Sub-prefect, his answer, simple as it was, had a terrible significance, "My men," said he, "are working down the bed-top for the first time—the men whose money you won were in better practise."

We left the house in the sole possession of two police agents—every one of the inmates being removed to prison on the spot. The Sub-prefect, after taking down my "procès verbal" in his office, returned with me to my hotel to get my passport. "Do you think," I asked, as I gave it to him, "that any men have really smothered in that bed, as they tried to smother *me?*"

"I have seen dozens of drowned men laid out at the Morgue," answered the Sub-prefect, "in whose pocketbooks were found letters stating that they had committed suicide in the Seine, because they had lost everything at the gaming-table. Do I know how many of those men entered the same gambling-house that *you* entered? won as *you* won? took that bed as *you* took it? slept in it? were smothered in it? and were privately thrown into the river, with a letter of explanation written by the murderers and placed in their pocketbooks? No man can say how many or how few have suffered the fate from which you have escaped. The people of the gambling-house kept their bedstead

machinery a secret from us—even from the police! The dead kept the rest of the secret for them. Good-night, or rather good-morning, Monsieur Faulkner! Be at my office again at nine o'clock—in the meantime, au revoir!"

The rest of my story is soon told. I was examined and reexamined; the gambling-house was strictly searched all through from top to bottom; the prisoners were separately interrogated; and two of the less guilty among them made a confession. I discovered that the Old Soldier was the master of the gambling-house—*justice* discovered that he had been drummed out of the army as a vagabond years ago; that he had been guilty of all sorts of villainies since; that he was in possession of stolen property, which the owners identified; and that he, the croupier, another accomplice, and the woman who had made my cup of coffee, were all in the secret of the bedstead. There appeared some reason to doubt whether the inferior persons attached to the house knew anything of the suffocating machinery; and they received the benefit of that doubt, by being treated simply as thieves and vagabonds. As for the Old Soldier and his two head myrmidons, they went to the galleys; the woman who had drugged my coffee was imprisoned for I forget how many years; the regular attendants at the gambling-house were considered "suspicious," and placed under "surveillance"; and I became, for one whole week (which is a long time), the head "lion" in Parisian society. My adventure was dramatized by three illustrious play-makers, but never saw theatrical daylight; for the censorship forbade the introduction on the stage of a correct copy of the gambling-house bedstead.

One good result was produced by my adventure,

which any censorship must have approved: it cured me of ever again trying "Rouge et Noir" as an amusement. The sight of a green cloth, with packs of cards and heaps of money on it, will henceforth be forever associated in my mind with the sight of a bed canopy descending to suffocate me in the silence and darkness of the night.

THE BAMBOOZLING OF MR. GASCOIGNE

By E. Phillips Oppenheim

Samuel T. Billingham of New York, recently landed from the great liner anchored a few miles out, walked along the terrace at Monte Carlo, serene, light-hearted, beatifically content. His yellow shoes and his variegated socks might be described as a trifle vivid, but the rest of his attire—his well-pressed gray suit, his irreproachable linen, and his well-shaped gray Homburg hat—was beyond criticism. He was a man of medium height, thickset, inclined a little, perhaps, to *embonpoint.*, His complexion was pink, his flaxen hair only slightly streaked with gray, his eyes filled with the light of good humor. He was possibly about forty-five years of age, but he walked with the spring of a young man. In his pocket was his *carte de saison* for the Cercle Privé and card of membership in the Sporting Club, taken out an hour or so before. In the same pocket was also a well-filled money case, and in his mind the consciousness of pleasant quarters in his favorite hotel, and the knowledge that he was in the spot which he loved more than any other place on earth. Furthermore, he was pleasantly aware of the fact that he was in the immediate neighborhood of various interesting little rendezvous where restrictions as to any refreshment he might deem advisable for his welfare were nonexistent; where compatriots were

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always to be found and amusement plentiful. Mr. Samuel T. Billingham, brimming over with good humor, was an agreeable circumstance in a wonderful setting.

At half past eleven o'clock—Mr. Billingham was a man of regular habits—he quitted the promenade, crossed the Place in front of the Casino, and selected a table outside the Café de Paris. He selected it simply because it happened to be the nearest empty one and without even a glance at his neighbors. It was nevertheless, without a doubt, by the direction of that mysterious influence called fate that he should have chosen that particular chair and ordered his champagne cocktail with that clear and pleasant directness of speech which caused the two people at the adjacent table to focus their attention upon him.

"A champagne cocktail," he enjoined confidently, frankly ignoring the fact that he was addressing a foreigner, "and some of them little salted nuts—and say, get a move on!"

The waiter hurried off. Mr. Samuel T. Billingham looked around him genially and met the faintly amused, gently inquiring gaze of his neighbors. Mr. Billingham smiled back again, but at that moment no words were exchanged.

The man and the girl were of ingratiating, even distinguished, appearance. The former seemed to be about fifty or perhaps fifty-five years of age. He was tall and thin, dressed in dark clothes from which the first freshness had gone, and tho no fault could have been found with his linen or the less important appurtenances of his toilet, it was noticeable that his shirt cuffs were a little frayed, his patent-leather shoes a little cracked, his coat a little shiny at the seams.

His face was gaunt, his eyes were deep-set, but his mouth had a most attractive and humorous outline. The girl with whom he was seated, and at whom Mr. Billingham had permitted himself a single glance of admiration, was young enough to be his daughter, but bore him no resemblance. Her hair was of a most attractive shade of brown, and her eyes were of the very darkest shade of blue. She seemed pale from the absence of all cosmetics, but her lack of color was, as a matter of fact, healthy and natural. There was something a little insolent about her expression, as tho she were one of those often at war with the world and circumstances, but among the cosmopolitan little crowd by which they were surrounded she preserved an air of distinction which a keen student of his fellow creatures, such as Mr. Billingham, was not slow to recognize. He waited for his cocktail without impatience and with the air of one entirely satisfied with himself and this particular corner of the world. Meanwhile the man and the girl talked—the former in broken English—and, altho they never seemed to raise their voices, every word they said was audible to their neighbor.

"It is incredible, Madelon," her companion exclaimed irritably, "that you should have been so careless! Our day is spoiled."

"I am very sorry," she replied humbly. "It is not often I forget such things. As you told me. I put three mille notes into my little sacque early this morning. Then, alas, the sun came out, I wore a different dress, and I brought the other sacque. There it is upon my dressing table!"

"And here are we," the man grumbled, "without a penny to pay for our *consommation,* to say nothing of

luncheon. Furthermore, there are the Rooms and perhaps a fortune waiting. Last night I dreamed of fourteen three times following."

"It is not so wonderful," she declared a little pettishly. "You always dream of fourteen, but it never arrives."

The champagne cocktail, well frosted and with a thin line of sugar around the rim of the glass, was brought to Mr. Billingham, who accepted it with an air of content. The eyes of the man and the girl rested for a moment upon the glass with a veiled expression of envy. Mr. Billingham lifted his hat and leaned forward.

"Sir," he said, addressing the man, "I am blessed—or should I say cursed?—with acute hearing. From what you were saying to the young lady, I gather that you have left your money at home."

His neighbor, also with his hat slightly uplifted, listened with an air of grave embarrassment.

"Sir," he rejoined, "I regret that, in some temporary excitement, owing to the discovery of my niece's carelessness, my voice was a little raised. May I venture to suggest, however, that my conversation was not intended to reach the ear of a stranger, nor can I—pardon me—understand what significance it can have for him."

"That's very well put," Mr. Billingham commented approvingly. "I'm rather a plain-spoken man myself, but what I figured out in my own mind was that this being my first morning in Monte Carlo after an absence of a good many years, and this being my favorite spot upon the earth, and the sun shining and my cocktail looking pretty good, I thought perhaps I might take

the liberty of inviting you and the young lady to join me."

The elderly gentleman rose to his feet, hat in hand, and bowed.

"Sir," he said, "we shall accept your courtesy in—may I say—a spirit of reciprocity. Permit me to present my niece, Mademoiselle Madelon de Félan. I myself am known as the Marquis de Félan."

Mr. Billingham rose also to his feet, lifted his hat, fumbled in his pocket, and produced a card.

"Samuel T. Billingham is my name, sir," he announced. "I come from New York and I'm interested in linoleum—that is to say, I was, only I've recently sold out. Pleased to meet you both. . . . Garçon!"

Their prospective host accepted an invitation to bring his chair to the table of his new acquaintances, and the succeeding half an hour passed agreeably enough. Certain orders concerning champagne cocktails were given and repeated while the usual amenities of general conversation were exchanged.

"I was thinking of moving on to Ciro's presently," Mr. Billingham announced, glancing at his watch. "We might try one there and, say, why shouldn't you and the young lady join me in a bite of luncheon?"

The girl laughed at him pleasantly—and it was a very pleasant laugh indeed.

"I'm so hungry," she murmured.

The marquis was touched. "Really, sir," he said, "your kindness is astounding. We will join you on the distinct understanding that we are allowed within the course of the next few days to reciprocate your hospitality."

"Good enough!" Mr. Billingham assented. "That

goes, then! We'll move on as soon as the garçon has brought me my change. Now promise you won't go back on our luncheon engagement, whatever happens."

"Not a chance," the girl assured him, with that twinkle in her eyes which Mr. Billingham was already beginning to love. "I'm far too hungry and Ciro's is my favorite restaurant."

"Very well, then," Mr. Billingham concluded, drawing his chair up a little closer. "So long as it's understood that you don't take offense, I just want to ask you one thing. Do I look such an almighty hayseed that you should pick me out to try that old wheeze on?"

There was a moment's silence. The orchestra rattled on, corks still popped, a pleasant murmur of conversation swelled and flowed around. The man and the girl, however, remained speechless. The latter had lost that smile of pleasant anticipation; her face was suddenly a little drawn and troubled. The man seemed older. His manner, however, preserved its dignity.

"Sir—" he began.

"Cut it out," Mr. Billingham begged. "I know pretty well what I look like, but you see it's my job to look like it. Anyone would think I was what I want them to think me—an American traveler, over here, probably for the first time in his life, with plenty of the stuff. Well, I ain't! I'm from the United States all right, but I'm looking after a little bit of that stuff myself. Perhaps that's why I sized you two up so easily."

The marquis half rose to his feet. Mr. Billingham pulled him back into his chair.

"Look here," he insisted genially, "cut out the starch. I'm a bit of a crook—I'll admit that—but I'm not a bad sort, and I've taken a fancy to you two. We're

going on to Ciro's and we're going to have that little lunch together. I can pay for it all right, and dinner afterward most likely. No reason why we shouldn't have a pleasant day together. We might even get to talking business."

The marquis coughed. He was beginning to recover himself.

"We shall certainly accompany you to Ciro's—er—Mr. Billingham," he assented. "In the meantime tell me, I beg of you, why you arrived at the conclusion that my niece and I were—er—?"

"I figured it out this way," Mr. Billingham interrupted. "You are both French. What did you want to talk in English for except that you wanted me to understand? That was enough for me to be going on with!"

"Our story is a sad one—" the marquis commenced.

"Say we'll have that after luncheon," Mr. Billingham suggested, rising.

The cocktails at Ciro's were equal to Mr. Billingham's anticipations, and the luncheon which he presently ordered was entirely satisfactory. Conversation, so far as his two guests were concerned, was a little stilted and diffident. Their host, however, was absolutely at his ease.

"I guess you wouldn't believe it, you two," he recounted, as they attacked a wonderful selection of *hors d'œuvres,* "but I was once a rich man, and I never got such fun out of life in those days as I am helping myself to now. I figure it out like this. When you've got your money in the bank, and more is coming in, you're kind of tied up with respectability. Now, since I was a lad I've always been for adventures, and

there's only one sort of adventure that counts, and that is the adventure which sets your brain against another man's and brings you in the stuff if you come out on top. It don't seem to me that a rich man has got any fighting outlook on life. Do you get me, Miss de Félan?"

"I understand what you mean," she replied, a little dubiously, "but I am afraid I do not agree with you. You see, I have always been poor and I hate poverty."

"Might be kind of different for a young woman," Mr. Billingham conceded thoughtfully, "but for a man, to go about the world doing no one any particular harm but living by his wits and what he can make by being a trifle smarter than other people—that's my idea of a happy time! I don't mind telling you that my present job over here is to swindle a man out of half a million dollars."

"Half a million dollars!" the marquis gasped. "It is incredible!"

"What an imagination," the girl sighed. "What courage!"

"I guess I'm not out for pinching old ladies' reticules," their host confided. "I like a big deal. And," he went on, leaning a little across the table, "if I can make up my mind that you two are to be trusted—I'm not saying I mightn't let you in on this little affair. I need just the sort of help you might be able to give. and that's a fact!"

The marquis concealed his impatience with all the restraint which was doubtless an inheritance of his breeding. He polished a worn and scratched horn-rimmed eyeglass with a clean but frayed handkerchief and prepared to listen with tolerant partiality. The girl, however, was frankly eager. She leaned across

toward her host, her elbows upon the table, her chin supported by her two hands. There was a light in her very beautiful eyes which was almost adoring. "Tell us about it, Mr. Billingham," she begged. "We are so very poor, and I am tired of being poor."

"My niece has the natural desire of the young for luxuries," the marquis observed tolerantly. "Frankly, I have outlived the necessity for wealth. My modest *déjeuner* here or at the Hôtel de Paris, my dinner, my bottle of Burgundy, my choice of brandies, *carte blanche* at my tailors, a mille or two to play with when the fancy seizes me, are all I wish for."

"You don't aim at putting together a pile for later on in life?" Mr. Billingham queried.

The marquis sighed. "That is beyond my hopes," he admitted.

"And you, mademoiselle?"

The girl was terribly earnest.

"If I had the chance," she said, "I would save. I love all the things which go to making life here so delightful, but more than anything else on earth I should love my independence. I should love to feel that it was no longer necessary for me to worry to-morrow as to how I was going to pay the next day's bills."

"Good spirit!" Mr. Billingham approved. "Good spirit, that!"

"Madelon is more practical than I," the marquis sighed. "And now concerning that little affair of business, Mr. Billingham, you were about to place before us."

Mr. Billingham's attention, however, had wandered. He was watching the approach of an obvious compatriot—a man the very antithesis of himself, but with

equally distinct transatlantic attributes; a small man with a sallow face and little hair, teeth stopped plentifully with gold, a wizened expression about the mouth, a short-sighted squint, neat clothes and square-toed shoes. Mr. Billingham welcomed him as a long-lost brother.

"Say, if this ain't Joe Gascoigne!" he exclaimed. "Well, well, when did you get here?"

Mr. Gascoigne's reciprocating smile was frosty. His manner showed him to be a man of reserve.

"Paris, last night," he answered. "How's oil?"

Mr. Billingham shook his head gloomily. "Can't say those new lands are panning out quite as we expected," he admitted.

"No gushers?" Mr. Gascoigne inquired.

"Nothing of that sort reported up to the present," was the cautious but somewhat depressed reply. "Still, one never knows. Where there's oil there's hope! Where are you staying?"

"Hôtel de Paris."

"Fine!" Mr. Billingham commented. "Sold your option yet, Joe?"

"I guess I didn't come to Monte Carlo to talk business," the other rejoined as he turned to pass on his way down the room.

Mr. Billingham was thoughtful for a moment or two after his friend's departure. The fact, however, did not impair his appetite.

"Why did you not present your friend?" the girl inquired. "I thought Americans always introduced everybody."

Mr. Billingham smiled. "That," he explained, "is the man whom we are going to rob. In case you come

into the game, I didn't ask you to shake hands with him. He's as nearsighted as a clam and too vain to wear spectacles."

"He is presumably wealthy," the marquis ventured.

"He is of the genus known as 'Millionaire'," Mr. Billingham acquiesced.

The marquis nodded approvingly.

"To rob the rich," he murmured, "is a reasonable hobby."

"To rob such a man," the marquis suggested hopefully—"or shall I say to assist in the redistribution of his wealth—would seem to be a charity. Five hundred thousand dollars, I think you said, sir?"

"Maybe more," Mr. Billingham assented. "It's like enough I'll take you two in, but we'll quit it now until later on. I've got to size you both up a bit more first. . . . Some salmon, this!" he added almost reverently as he laid down his fork. "The sauce tastes good to me too."

"Loire salmon," the marquis confided. "Very good fish, but short season."

"Supposing you get on with that sad story of yours, Marquis," Mr. Billingham proposed, as they waited for the next course. "I don't say as I'm going to believe every word of it, mind you, but I'd like to hear your own account of yourself and the young lady."

The marquis was a little stiff at first, but he gradually warmed to his task. He came, it appeared, of a noble but impoverished family, and his various attempts at earning an honest living had met with singular lack of success. He had been, in turn, a vineyard proprietor, a vender of wines, an insurance agent, and had interested himself in a cigaret business. In all these undertakings he had suffered from lack of capital.

A year ago the daughter of his only brother, who had married an Englishwoman, was left with practically no one else to look after her. They had lived in Paris for some short time upon the very trifling sum of money which she had brought with her. A small investment in a lottery business had been a failure. Behold them at Monte Carlo, practically destitute! It was becoming indeed a question of money sufficient for a meal between them. Mademoiselle Madelon was ready to give French lessons and she had some knowledge of typing. The marquis had even gone so far as to offer himself as a sort of super-guide to strangers of wealth to whom the best restaurants and manifold pleasures of the place were unknown.

"Ever any trouble with the police?" Mr. Billingham asked.

"Not in these parts," the marquis hastened to explain. There had been some slight misunderstanding in Paris, he added, with reference to his mismanagement of a gambling club, and the investigation into his lottery business had made a hurried departure from the city advisable. Here, however, they had a clean sheet; had modest rooms at an unpretentious hotel, and so far had paid their way.

"I sized you both up as being amateurs in this crook business," Mr. Billingham observed. "You may make good at it, of course, but I am not so sure about the young lady—kind of dangerous, with her appearance!"

"Sir," the marquis replied, "I am a man of honor, but frankly I think that my niece should make more use of her undoubted attractions. She receives many invitations to lunch or dine with acquaintances, all of which she refuses. I think she is wrong."

Madelon remained undisturbed. The frank admiration with which her host was contemplating her brought only a slight tinge of color into her cheeks.

"My uncle thinks always," she explained, "of some millionaire or nobleman who will invite me to lunch and find me so charming that he will propose marriage to me. Our acquaintances unfortunately are of the bar or the Casino, and I do not fancy that they are quite of the class likely to propose marriage to an honest but impecunious young woman."

"One never knows," the marquis grumbled. "This is the land of chance, and in case of trouble you have always me to protect you."

Madelon preserved a tactful silence, and the luncheon drew on to its close.

After he had paid the bill Mr. Billingham produced five hundred-franc notes.

"What about dining with me to-night?" he inquired.

"Two good meals in one day!" the girl exclaimed blissfully.

"We shall be charmed," the marquis assented, with a courteous wave of the hand.

"I have only one evening dress," the girl observed thoughtfully.

"One will be all you'll need," was her prospective host's cheerful rejoinder. "I'll get a corner table in the Sporting Club. And if I can see my way to letting you in on this little job of mine I'll tell you about it."

Perhaps because of the smallness of the room and the absence of any orchestral music, the babel of conversation at the Sporting Club was that night almost deafening. Under its cover Mr. Samuel T. Billingham took his two guests into his confidence.

"It ain't worth while," he began, leaning forward so

that the three heads nearly touched, "to try and put you wise to all the details, but as a business proposition this is how the matter stands. That swab, Joseph Gascoigne, whom you saw at lunch, has got an option on ten thousand shares in an oil tract out in Arkansas—the 'Great Divide,' they call it. He lent 'em some money for a new plant a year ago and insisted on the option in return. The option's up on Saturday. Last month they struck oil in eleven different places. Luckily the boss of the company was down there and he had all work stopped at once. It's a big find, tho, and if Joe Gascoigne gets to hear of it and exercises the option it means that he'll buy ten thousand shares at a hundred dollars that are certainly worth a thousand dollars and maybe worth twice as much."

"What happens to the shares if Mr. Gascoigne does not exercise his option?" the girl asked.

Mr. Billingham looked at her with a smile of admiration.

"A cute question," he admitted. "Those shares are divided equally among the five directors—or, rather, they are allowed to buy them at a low price. Now, I'm well in with the boss of this company, and he knows I don't mind a bit of crooked work occasionally. If I, or we, can stop Joe Gascoigne cabling to America before Saturday and taking up his option, there's fifteen thousand dollars coming to me."

"Fifteen thousand dollars!" the girl murmured.

The marquis rolled his eyes in silent ecstasy. "An affair of two hundred thousand francs!" he gasped.

"What makes me look for a little help in the matter," Mr. Billingham continued, "is that Joe is kind

of wise to my being in with the crowd, and if he sees too much of me he'll be suspicious."

"You have some sort of plan?" Madelon demanded abruptly.

"I'd like his code," Mr. Billingham confided. "It's the simplest affair—two typewritten pages inside blue cardboard covers with just paper fasteners through. There ain't more than twenty or thirty sentences there, and the only other man who has a copy is his partner in New York.

"He's in Room 246, Hôtel de Paris. What I want is to get hold of the book for an hour without his knowing and then replace it."

The girl said nothing. She was looking down at her plate with a thoughtful smile upon her lips. Mr. Billingham watched her. He had noticed that smile once before during the last few minutes.

"You have an idea, mademoiselle?" he ventured.

She nodded. "This morning," she confided, "I went to a bureau here to try to find a post as lady's companion or secretary. There was nothing of the sort to be had. The only vacancies were for chambermaids at the Hôtel de Paris."

"It's an idea," Mr. Billingham admitted, "but the hotel is a big place. How do you know, supposing they take you on, that you will be anywhere near Joe Gascoigne's rooms?"

"I have spoken several times to the housekeeper," Madelon explained. "I may be able to arrange it. It seems to me worth trying."

"To-day is Monday," Mr. Billingham reflected. "We have until Friday at least. Joe has promised to cable on Friday. He'll wait until then for the latest information."

Mr. Joseph Gascoigne, altho not in the strict sense of the word a susceptible man, was not wholly insensible to feminine attractions. Seated at his desk with a pile of cable forms before him and an open manuscript code book on his left-hand side, he heard the soft ingress of his very attractive-looking chambermaid into the bathroom. He laid down his pen and listened. It was she beyond a doubt. It was an occasion to progress a little in the flirtation which he had already essayed. He crossed the room.

"Hello! Late this morning, aren't you?" he remarked, looking into the bathroom.

Madelon glanced at him from behind a barricade of towels.

"There is so much to do," she complained. "One fatigues one's self here terribly."

Mr. Gascoigne smiled palely. It was an opening.

"The work is too hard for you," he declared. "How would you like to leave it and let me find you something easier?"

"Ah, monsieur!" she sighed.

He advanced a little nearer.

"I've had my eye on you all this week," he confided. "You're too good for this job. Give 'em notice. Leave right away. Say where you live and I'll come round this afternoon and I bet you we fix up something a good deal better than this."

Madelon was half distressed, half overcome by some sort of emotion. Mr. Gascoigne smiled and drew out his pocketbook.

"Say, do you know what this is?" he asked. "Guess you don't come across many of them. It's a mille note. Put it in your pocket, drop those towels, give

me a kiss, and go and tell the housekeeper you've found a better job."

Madelon gazed at the mille note ecstatically. "But monsieur is generous!" she exclaimed.

Monsieur's telephone bell rang. He turned away with annoyance.

"Wait one second," he begged. "I'll be right back. . . . Well, what's the matter?" he demanded down the telephone.

It was the hotel clerk who spoke. A gentleman was below begging that Mr. Gascoigne would spare him five minutes on a matter of urgent importance. The gentleman declined to mount. He would only say that his business had some connection with America.

"I'll be right down," Mr. Gascoigne announced, and hastened back to where Madelon was still engaged with the towels.

"Say, you're not in a hurry, are you?" he inquired.

"I do what you tell me," she assured him, clutching the mille note tightly in her fingers, and smiling at him bewitchingly. "I go home now—15 Avenue de Mimosas. I wait until you come."

Mr. Gascoigne hesitated. Madelon was looking very attractive, but the door was open and the visit of the gentleman downstairs intrigued him. He patted her on the shoulder.

"I'll be round directly after lunch," he promised. "We'll fix up something right away. . . ."

In the hall the hotel clerk directed his attention to the marquis, who, with sundry of the slightly shabby details of his toilet now amended, presented an impressive appearance. His manner, however, as he stepped

forward to accost Mr. Gascoigne was a little furtive. He had the air of not being entirely at his ease.

"Mr. Gascoigne, I believe," he murmured.

"That's may name," was the somewhat surprized admission. "What can I do for you?"

"I am the Marquis de Félan," the visitor announced. "I desire a few minutes' conversation with you—not here, if possible. Will you step across with me to the Café de Paris?"

"But I don't know you," Mr. Gascoigne objected. "What business can you have with me?"

"Business of little importance to myself, perhaps," was the guarded reply, "but of utmost importance to you. I can put you in possession of information with regard to some business which you propose to transact to-day or to-morrow—very important information."

A light began to break in upon Mr. Gascoigne.

"Say, didn't I see you lunching with that guy Billingham?" he demanded.

"You did," the marquis acknowledged. "It is in connection with something which transpired at that luncheon—"

"I'll come right along with you," Mr. Gascoigne interrupted.

The two men left the place together, the marquis still with an air of one desiring to escape observation. He glanced to the right and to the left in constant disquietude. At the Café de Paris he led the way to a corner of the bar. Then he sat down with an air of relief.

"Now let's get to business," Mr. Gascoigne begged.

The marquis glanced toward the bartender. His companion accepted the hint and ordered refreshments.

"My business," the marquis commenced, "is that I

have been insulted by a person who is, I believe, a fellow countryman of yours."

"Samuel Billingham?" Mr. Gascoigne muttered.

"That is his name," the marquis admitted. "You will understand, sir, that I am not a man of wealth, that I am indeed a very poor man. Under circumstances which I need not detail I invited Mr. Billingham to oblige me with a small loan—no more than ten milles. It is there that he insults me."

"Wouldn't part, eh?" Mr. Gascoigne queried.

"On the contary," the marquis rejoined, "he offered to increase the amount, but on a condition so loathsome that to mention it gives me pain. He wished me to join in a plot to deceive you concerning the value of some shares in Arkansas."

"The devil he did!" the other exclaimed. "Say, this is interesting!"

"To me it was a situation most humiliating," the marquis declared. "Tears were in my eyes as I listened to his infamous proposition. I made no promise. I left him. He confided in me the value of those shares and all about them. I say nothing. I make him no promise. He tempted me with the money. It is a terrible thing, Mr. Gascoigne, to be poor. Then I asked myself what an honorable man would do. I decided to come to you."

"How much did you say that loan was to be?" Mr. Gascoigne inquired.

"Ten milles—a paltry ten milles," the marquis groaned.

Mr. Gascoigne was not a man who loved parting with money, but there were times when he was prompt

in action. He opened his pocketbook, counted out ten milles and folded them up.

"Look here, Marquis," he said, "I'll be on the square with you. Tell me just what Samuel Billingham said about those shares and you can accept the loan from me instead of from him—accept it, too, with nothing on your conscience."

The marquis finished a cocktail and made signs toward the bar.

"I will disclose the situation to you," he promised. "It gives me pain, but it is just retribution. One month ago, oil—how you say that?—gushed from eleven wells on this property. The chairman of the company was there. He ordered everything, as far as possible; the secret was to be kept until after Monday. I know why—Mr. Billingham told me why. It is because you have the right to buy most of these shares at a low price."

Joseph Gascoigne leaned back in his chair. He thrust both hands into his trousers pockets, turned over his keys, and chuckled.

"Say, this is great!" he declared as he banished the man with a twenty-franc note. "I don't mind telling you, Marquis, that I couldn't get any definite information, but I had a sort of a feeling there was something doing down there. So old Samuel was going to do me out of my little deal, eh? Do you know what I shall do, Marquis?"

The latter shook his head politely.

"I shall go right back to my sitting-room," Mr. Gascoigne continued, "and send that cable right away. I shall take the whole of the ten thousand shares. I'll risk your information being O. K. I believe in it, anyway. Stick that ten milles in your pocketbook, Mar-

quis, and if this comes off there will be another ten milles on the top of it, and you can pay me in the year two thousand."

It was quite some time before he and the marquis parted; the marquis on his way to the Casino, Mr. Gascoigne to his sitting-room. Arrived there, he found everything as he had left it, but there was a little note addressed to him. He tore it open.

"Would monsieur kindly come to 15 Avenue de Mimosas on Monday—not before. My aunt is there. She leaves midday Monday and I shall be alone.

"Thanking monsieur for his generosity and anticipating,

MADELON."

Mr. Gascoigne's first feeling of disappointment hastily passed. After all, it was not long to wait. He drew the code book toward him, ran his finger down the first page and selected a phrase.

HUNGERING—*Have decided to avail myself of option in Great Divide shares. Secure the whole ten thousand on my account.*

Mr. Gascoigne smiled. He wrote the word HUNGERING upon the cable form and took it himself to the office.

"What a dinner!" exclaimed François, the chief maître d'hôtel at the restaurant of the Sporting Club.

"What a prince!" murmured his assistant, glancing at the hundred-franc note in his hand.

There was a great cluster of red roses in the center of the table; a magnum of Cliquot in an ice pail by its side; an amazing menu on each of the three plates. Behind the screen an emissary from the bar waited

with a cocktail shaker in his hand, ready to rush out at the psychological moment. There was caviar in ice; *langouste,* the large Mediterranean lobster; pheasants which had known no cold storage; a *vol-au-vent,* a delicious pâte of which the chef had spoken with tears in his eyes. Nevertheless the marquis and Madelon entered the room a little anxiously. One glance, however, at their host's face and all was well. Mr. Samuel T. Billingham was very happy, and when he was happy he showed it.

"Mademoiselle, no guest so charming has ever graced my table," he murmured as he bent over her hand. "If dresses like this are to be bought ready to wear in Monte Carlo, it is indeed an amazing place. Marquis, success! The time has passed. I have my cable. To the surprize of many people in New York, Mr. Joseph Gascoigne cabled his decision not to exercise his option on those ten thousand shares."

"You relieve my mind greatly," the marquis confessed. "I was afraid of some slip at the last moment."

They took their places. The details of the repast unfolded themselves. The marquis and his niece exchanged ecstatic glances. Madelon also, in her way —like most well-brought-up young women—approved of good food and the best wine.

"It is a feast of celebration, this," Mr. Billingham declared, scarcely able to take his eyes off his beautiful guest. "We have achieved a veritable triumph. We have perpetrated a swindle for which the law cannot touch us. We have robbed a miserable, mean, miserly old skunk of what I think in the end may turn out to be the best part of a million dollars. Let us see how we stand."

The marquis' fingers shook as he lit a cigaret and sipped his wine.

"Your *douceurs,* up to the present," this prince of adventurers continued, "are insignificant. The few francs I have advanced we will forget."

"There was my tip as chambermaid," Madelon murmured. "He gave me a mille note."

"A stingy business!" was her host's criticism. "We take no account of that either."

"I did a little better," the marquis confessed. "I got ten milles for betraying your secret and informing him of the worth of his option."

Mr. Billingham waved his hand.

"You introduced a note of humor into the situation, Marquis," he declared. "It was a brain wave, that! That ten milles also we ignore. You are welcome to it. The *douceur* which I receive is fifteen thousand dollars. I myself will retain five thousand, there will be five thousand for you mademoiselle, and five thousand for you, Marquis."

"It is princely!" Madelon gasped.

"It is seventy-five thousand francs," the marquis faltered.

"It is some money," Mr. Billingham admitted, "but I tell you right here that without mademoiselle I might have found great difficulty in getting hold of the code. Of course all that I did was to alter the terms. You, Marquis, kept Mr. Gascoigne engaged at the Café de Paris while I worked hard with my typewriter. I can say no more than that I consider myself highly fortunate to have come across two assistants of such intelligence and," Mr. Billingham concluded, with a sigh—"such charm."

"You are what we used to call in England 'a great

dear'," Madelon whispered. "I hope before long you will find something else for us to do."

"Sure," Mr. Billingham assented fervently. "Five thousand dollars is a pretty good sum, but it don't carry a man very far in Monte Carlo."

The first glimmering of uneasiness came to Mr. Joseph Gascoigne when he demanded a *petite voiture* and asked to be driven to 15 Avenue de Mimosas. The driver looked blank, and appealed to the concierge, who shook his head.

"Je ne le connais pas," the driver declared.

"Ni moi non plus," the concierge echoed.

"What do you mean? What's the trouble!" Mr. Gascoigne demanded.

"There is no such street, sir," the concierge announced. "I have lived in Monte Carlo for many years, and I can assure you that there is no such place as the Avenue de Mimosas."

Mr. Gascoigne hesitated for a moment, bestowed an inadequate *pourboire* upon the coachman, and stepped back into the hotel. Was it possible that the girl was fooling him; had taken his mille and gone off? He ascended to his room and made cautious inquiries of the valet. Yes, the young woman had left unexpectedly. She had made no complaint, but simply stated that she could not continue the work. As for her address, she had given none. The valet was quite sure that there was no such street. . . .

Mr. Gascoigne opened a cable, brought in at that moment, with eager fingers. As he read it his face grew first bewildered, then white and evil.

"Am astonished you have decided not to exercise option but have acted according to your instructions. Venture assure you you have made great mistake."

Mr. Gascoigne snatched at his manuscript code book, and tore open the pages. There it was, without a doubt—

HUNGERING—*Have decided to avail myself of option in Great Divide shares. Secure the whole ten thousand on my account.*

He sat down at once and wrote a cable—

"What the hell do you mean? Cabled HUNGERING. Word for word translation. Have decided to avail myself of option in Great Divide shares. Secure the whole ten thousand on my account. Reply."

It was about twelve o'clock next morning when the reply came. It was given to him just as he was leaving the Hôtel de Paris for a restless stroll along the Terrace. He tore it open and read:

"Exact translation HUNGERING, attested here by whole office. Have decided not to exercise option on shares in Great Divide. Please inform company."

Mr. Gascoigne clutched the cablegram in his fingers. He looked across the square with vacant eyes. Such a mistake in transcription seemed incredible. And then there turned the corner Mr. Samuel T. Billingham, resplendent in a suit of light gray, with a carnation in his buttonhole and a cigar in his mouth. On one side walked the marquis, looking very spruce and smiling, and on the other, very becomingly dressed, and not in the least like a chambermaid, was Madelon. Suddenly something in one of her graceful movements, or perhaps the ripple of her laughter, was startlingly reminiscent of Mr. Gascoigne's disappointed hopes.

A hideous clear-sightedness seized him. He remem-

bered the manuscript code book open upon his table, his absence for the best part of an hour with the marquis, some slight surprize at the freshness of the type the next time he had consulted the code book, and finally Mr. Samuel T. Billingham's connection with the Great Divide Oil Company and his reputation.

They passed him: Mr. Billingham with a little wave of the hand and a solemn wink, Madelon with a frank laugh into his face, and the marquis with a patronizing nod. He looked after them and he shook his fist. He was cold with fury, but with a mighty effort at self-restraint he remained silent.

For, altho it was very certain he had been robbed, there was really nothing he could do!